

3700, Ch. 1269

LECTURES  
ON THE  
CATECHISM  
OF THE  
CHURCH OF ENGLAND.

---

By WILLIAM GILPIN, M. A.  
PREBENDARY OF SALISBURY,  
AND VICAR OF BOLDRE NEAR LYMINGTON.

---

THE FIFTH EDITION.

---

LONDON:

Printed by A. Strahan, Printers Street,  
FOR T. CADELL JUN. AND W. DAVIES, STRAND.

1799.



Digitized by srujanika@gmail.com

18...907

TO THE  
YOUNG GENTLEMEN,  
WHO HAVE BEEN EDUCATED AT  
CHEAM SCHOOL IN SURREY.

GENTLEMEN,

THE following Lectures on the Catechism of the Church of England have little pretence, I fear, to expect attention from the generality of readers, who may be furnished with better helps: but as they were composed for your use; and as several of you, at different times, have desired copies of them, they may perhaps meet with a more favorable reception among you. They accost you with the familiarity of an old friend, and hope to get admittance when wiser instructors are neglected.

I have endeavoured in some degree to give them a better form than that plain one in which you knew them. I have abridged them also, as I would not trespass too much upon your hours of leisure or business; and should be sorry to fatigue your patience as a friend, though I may have been sometimes obliged to do it as a master.

On the evidences of our religion and the great doctrines of Christianity, it hath been my chief endeavour to engage your attention. If the mind be deeply impressed with these leading truths, it requires only a slighter lesson on morals. Faith, we know, was the great point in preaching the gospel; and he who seriously believes it cannot fail of practising the duties it inculcates.

I have endeavoured, in the course of these Lectures, to shew you, that scarcely any of the great truths of the gospel were

So wholly new, but that some notices of them, or at least resemblances, may be traced even among heathen nations—among those which were more polished, especially, and perhaps among all, if we were more intimately acquainted with them. As this shews either a great harmony between reason and revelation; or that these preparatory notices originated immediately from the Deity; it always appeared to me an argument, that carried great conviction; and strongly to oppose the endeavours of those persons, who labour to set reason and revelation at variance.

In pressing moral rules, I have sometimes rather chosen a quotation from Horace, than a text from Scripture. In *one sense*, he is better authority than an apostle. If his unenlightened mind had such just and noble sentiments, what may be expected from a Christian?

It was some inducement to me, Gentlemen, in publishing these papers, to leave in your memory a testimony of that earnestness with which I always wished to press upon you the great truths of religion and virtue. These, without any disparagement to human literature, ought certainly to be the first objects of education. Where one miscarries for want of learning, numbers miscarry for want of principles.

I have, with great satisfaction, seen many of you, as you came forward in life, filling your several stations with propriety and credit: and it is among the pleasures of my retirement, to think, I shall see many more. A few mortifications I have had. But there is some ground, at least, to hope, that where good principles have been early inculcated, they may, sooner or later, revive: and should these Lectures contribute in any degree to that purpose, they will have answered one of my principal ends.

That

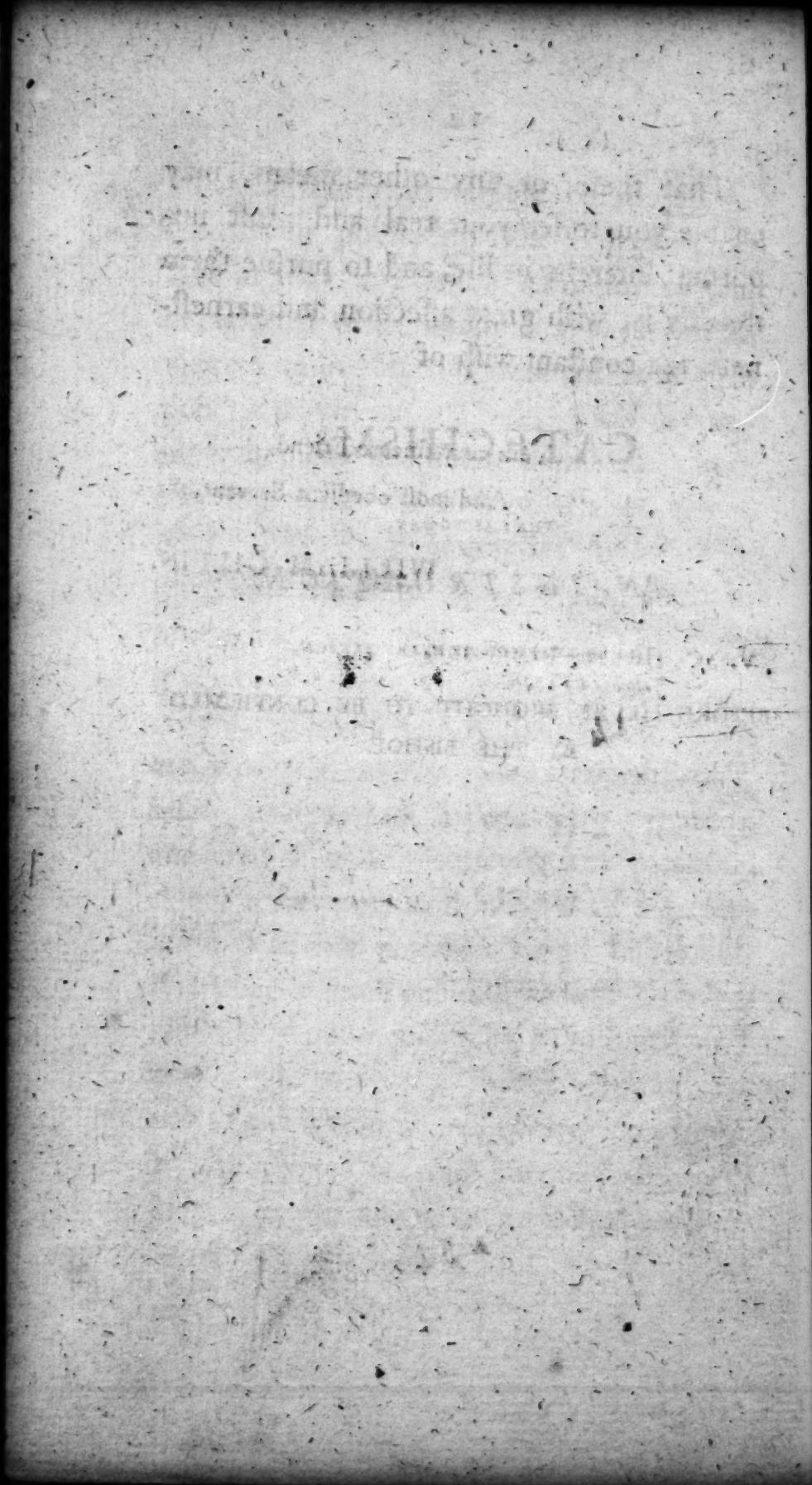
That these, or any other means, may enable you to see your real and most important interests in life, and to pursue them steadily is, with great affection and earnestness, the constant wish of

Your very sincere Friend,

And most obedient Servant,

WILLIAM GILPIN.

VICAR'S HILL near LYMINOTON,  
January 6, 1779.



A

# CATECHISM:

THAT IS TO SAY,

*AN INSTRUCTION.*

TO BE LEARNED OF EVERY PERSON,

BEFORE HE BE BROUGHT TO BE CONFIRMED

BY THE BISHOP.



A

C A T E C H I S M,

&c. &c. &c.

---

*Question.*

WHAT is your name?

*Ans.* N. or M.

*Quest.* Who gave you this name?

*Ans.* My godfathers and godmothers in my baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

*Quest.* What did your godfathers and godmothers then for you?

*Ans.* They did promise and vow three things in my name: First, that I should renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. Secondly, that I should believe all the articles of the Christian faith. And, thirdly, that I should keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life.

*Ques.* Dost not thou think thou art bound to believe and do as they have promised for thee?

*Answ.* Yes, verily; and by God's help so I will. And I heartily thank our heavenly Father, that he hath called me to this state of salvation through Jesus Christ our Saviour. And I pray unto God to give me his grace, that I may continue in the same unto my life's end.

*Catechist.* Rehearse the articles of thy belief?

*Answer.*

I BELIEVE in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth:

And in Jesus Christ his only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead, and buried; he descended into hell. The third day he rose again from the dead; he ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God the Father Almighty; from thence he shall come to judge the quick and the dead.

I believe in the Holy Ghost; the holy catholic church; the communion of saints; the forgiveness of sins; the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

*Ques.* What dost thou chiefly learn in these articles of thy belief?

*Answ.*

*Answe.* First, I learn to believe in God the Father, who hath made me, and all the world; Secondly, in God the Son, who hath redeemed me, and all mankind;

Thirdly, in God the Holy Ghost, who sanctifieth me, and all the elect people of God.

*Quest.* You said that your godfathers and godmothers did promise for you, that you should keep God's commandments: Tell me how many there be?

*Answe.* Ten.

*Quest.* Which be they?

*Answer.*

THE same which God spake in the twentieth chapter of Exodus, saying, I am the Lord, thy God, who brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage.

I. Thou shalt have none other gods but me.  
 II. Thou shall not make to thyself any graven image, nor the likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down to them, nor worship them: for I the Lord, thy God, am a jealous God, and visit the sins of the fathers upon the children, unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me; and shew mercy unto thou-

thoufands in them that love me, and keep my commandments.

III. Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord, thy God, in vain: for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain.

IV. Rememb're that thou keep holy the sabbath day. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all that thou hast to do: but the seventh day is the sabbath of the Lord, thy God. In it thou shall do no manner of work, thou, and thy son, and thy daughter, thy man-servant, and thy maid-servant, thy cattle, and thy stranger that is within thy gates. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day; wherefore the Lord blessed the seventh day, and hallowed it.

V. Honour thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

VI. Thou shalt do no murder.

VII. Thou shalt not commit adultery.

VIII. Thou shalt not steal.

IX. Thou shalt not bear false witness against thy neighbour.

X. Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife, nor his servant, nor his maid, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor any thing that is his.

*Ques.* What dost thou chiefly learn by these commandments?

*Answ.* I learn two things; my duty towards God, and my duty towards my neighbour.

*Ques.* What is thy duty towards God?

*Answ.* My duty towards God is, to believe in him, to fear him, and to love him with all my heart, with all my mind, with all my soul, and with all my strength: to worship him, to give him thanks, to put my whole trust in him, to call upon him, to honour his holy name and his word, and to serve him truly all the days of my life.

*Ques.* What is thy duty towards thy neighbour?

*Answ.* My duty towards my neighbour is, to love him as myself, and to do to all men, as I would they should do unto me. To love, honour, and succour my father and mother. To honour and obey the king, and all that are put in authority under him. To submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters. To order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters. To hurt nobody by word or deed. To be true and just in all my dealings. To bear no malice or hatred in my heart. To keep my hands from picking and stealing; and my tongue from evil speaking, lying, and slandering. To keep my body in temperance, soberness, and chastity. Not

to

to covet nor desire other men's goods: but to learn, and labour truly to get my own living; and to do my duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call me.

*Catechist.* My good child, know this, that thou art not able to do these things of thyself, nor to walk in the commandments of God, and to serve him, without his special grace; which thou must learn at all times to call for by diligent prayer. Let me hear, therefore, if thou canst say the Lord's prayer.

*Answer.*

OUR Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name: thy kingdom come: thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven: give us this day our daily bread: and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us: and lead us not into temptation: but deliver us from evil. Amen.

*Ques.* What desirest thou of God in this prayer?

*Answ.* I desire my Lord God, our heavenly Father, who is the giver of all goodness, to send his grace unto me, and to all people; that we may worship him, serve him, and obey him, as we ought to do. And I pray unto God, that he will send us all things that be needful both for our souls and bodies; and that he will be merciful unto us, and.

and forgive us our sins ; and that it will please him to save and defend us in all dangers ghostly and bodily ; and that he will keep us from all sin and wickedness, and from our ghostly enemy, and from everlasting death. And this I trust he will do of his mercy and goodness, through our Lord Jesus Christ ; and therefore I say, Amen. So be it.

*Question.*

How many sacraments hath Christ ordained in his church ?

*Answ.* Two only as generally necessary to salvation ; that is to say, baptism and the supper of the Lord.

*Quest.* What meanest thou by this word *Sacrament* ?

*Answ.* I mean an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace given unto us ; ordained by Christ himself as a mean whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof.

*Quest.* How many parts are there in a sacrament ?

*Answ.* Two ; the outward visible sign, and the inward spiritual grace.

*Quest.* What is the outward visible sign, or form in baptism ?

*Answ.* Water ; wherein the person is baptized, *in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.*

*Quest.*

*Quest.* What is the inward and spiritual grace?

*Answ.* A death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness; for being by nature born in sin, and the children of wrath, we are hereby made the children of grace.

*Quest.* What is required of persons to be baptized?

*Answ.* Repentance, whereby they forsake sin; and faith, whereby they stedfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament.

*Quest.* Why, then, are infants baptized when by reason of their tender age they cannot perform them?

*Answ.* Because they promise them both by their sureties; which promise, when they come of age, themselves are bound to perform.

*Quest.* Why was the sacrament of the Lord's supper ordained?

*Answ.* For the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby.

*Quest.* What is the outward part or sign of the Lord's supper?

*Answ.* Bread and wine; which the Lord hath commanded to be received.

*Quest.* What is the inward part or thing signified?

*Answ.*

*Answ.* The body and blood of Christ which are verily and indeed taken, and received by the faithful in the Lord's supper.

*Quest.* What are the benefits whereof we are partakers thereby?

*Answ.* The strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine.

*Quest.* What is required of them who come to the Lord's supper?

*Answ.* To examine themselves whether they repent them truly of their former sins; stedfastly purposing to lead a new life; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of his death, and to be in charity with all men.



## LECTURE I.

*History of the catechism—general contents of it—baptismal vow—use of sponsors—name given in baptism—substance of the vow—renunciation of sin—faith—obedience—connection between them—St. Paul's doctrine with regard to faith explained—promises made on God's part upon our keeping the vow—divine assistance necessary.*

IT was among the earliest cares of the first promoters of the Reformation to provide a catechism for the instruction of youth. But the same caution, amidst so many prejudices, was necessarily to be used in this matter as had been used in all the other religious transactions of those times. At first, it was thought sufficient to begin with such common things as were acknowledged equally by papists and protestants. The first catechism therefore consisted simply of the creed, the ten commandments, and the Lord's prayer; and it was no easy matter to bring even these into general use. They were received by the people, in the midst of that profound ignorance which then reigned, as a species of incantation; and it was long before the grossness of vulgar conception was enlightened enough to apprehend that

the



2

the creed, the ten commandments, and the Lord's prayer, meant simply to direct their *faith, practice, and devotion.*

This was all the progress that was made in catechetical instruction from the beginning of the Reformation till so late a period as the year 1549. About that time a farther attempt was made by Archbishop Cranmer, as it is commonly supposed. He ventured to add a few cautious explanatory passages, which was all the prejudices of men would yet bear. The great prudence indeed of that wise and good prelate appeared in nothing more than in the easy movements with which he introduced every change.

In the year 1553 a farther attempt was hazarded. A catechism was published by authority, in which not only the creed, the ten commandments, and the Lord's prayer were more fully expounded, but a brief explanation also of the sacraments was added. This bold work, however, was not ventured in the English tongue, but was published in Latin for the use of schools. Archbishop Wake \*, whose authority I follow, supposes this catechism to be the first model of that which is now in use.

\* See the Dedication to his Commentary on the Church Catechism.

Thus

Thus the matter rested till the reign of Elizabeth. In the meantime, the violent measures of her predecessor had tended greatly to open an inquisitive temper in the age, and to abolish its prejudices. Men began to have some notion of thinking for themselves; and it was no longer necessary to observe that extreme caution which had hitherto been observed in addressing them on religious subjects. The catechism, therefore, was now improved on a more liberal plan; and having undergone several reviews, was at length published by authority, nearly in its present form, in the year 1563. It ought to be mentioned, that the person principally concerned in this work was Nowel, dean of St. Paul's.

From this short history of the catechism, the various forms it underwent, and the care and caution employed in composing it, we need not wonder at finding it a judicious and comprehensive summary of the principles and doctrines of the Christian religion.

It begins with a recital of our *baptismal vow*, as a kind of preface to the whole. It then lays down the great Christian principle of *faith*; and leaving all mysterious inquiries, in which this subject is involved, passes on to the rules of *practice*.

Having briefly recited these, it concludes with an explanation of baptism and the Lord's supper.

Our baptismal vow is certainly the best preface to that belief, and the great practice in which that vow engageth us. But before we examine the vow itself, two appendages of it require explanation—the use of sponsors, and the addition of a name.

With regard to the *sponsor*, the church probably imitates the appointment of the legal guardian, making the best provision it can for the pious education of orphans and deserted children. The temporal and the spiritual guardian may equally betray their trust, both are culpable, both accountable: but surely the latter breaks the more sacred engagement.

With regard to the *name*, it is no part of the sacrament; nor pretends to scriptural authority. It rests merely on ancient usage. A custom had generally obtained of giving a new name on adopting a new member into a family. We find it common among the Greeks, the Romans, and the Jews; nay, we read that even God himself, when he received Abram into covenant, gave an early sanction to this usage, by changing his name to

to Abraham. In imitation of this common practice, the old Christians gave baptismal names to their children, which were intended to point out their *heavenly adoption*, as their surnames distinguished their *temporal alliance*.

From considering the use of sponsors and of the name, in baptism, we proceed to the *vow* itself. My godfathers did promise in my name; 1st, *That I should renounce the devil, and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh;* 2dly, *That I should believe all the articles of the Christian faith;* and, 3dly, *That I should keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life.*

First, then, we promise to *renounce the devil, and all his works, the pomps and vanities of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh.* The *devil, the world, and the flesh,* is a comprehensive mode of expressing every species of sin, however distinguished, and from whatever source derived; all which we not only engage to renounce as far as we are able; but also to take pains in tracing the labyrinths of our own hearts, and in removing the glosses of self-deceit. Without this, all renunciation of sin is pretence.

Being thus enjoined to renounce our gross habitual sins, and those bad inclinations which lead

us into them ; we are required next to *believe all the articles of the Christian faith.* This is a natural progression. When we are thoroughly convinced of the malignity of sin, we in course will to avoid the ill consequences of it ; and are prepared to give a fair hearing to the evidences of religion. There is a close connection between vice and infidelity. They mutually support each other. The same connection subsists between a well-disposed mind and the truths of religion ; and *faith* perhaps is not so involuntary an act as many of our modern philosophers would persuade us.

After *believing the articles of the Christian faith*, we are lastly enjoined to *keep God's holy will and commandments.* Here too is the same natural progression. As the renunciation of sin prepares the way for faith, so does faith lead directly to obedience. They seem related to each other as the mean and the end. *The end of the commandment, faith the apostle, is charity out of a pure heart and good conscience, and faith unfeigned.* Faith (which is the act of believing on rational evidence) is the great fountain from which all Christian virtues spring. No man will obey a law, till he hath informed himself whether it be properly authorized ; or, in other words, till he believe in the jurisdiction that enacted it. — If our faith in Christ

doth not lead us to obey him, it is what the Scriptures call *a dead faith*, in opposition to a *saving one*.

To this inseparable connection between faith and obedience, St. Paul's doctrine may be objected, where he seems, in some places, to lay the whole stress on *faith*, in opposition to *works*.\* But it is plain, St. Paul's argument in these passages requires him to mean by *faith*, the whole system of the Christian religion, (which is indeed the meaning of the word in many other parts of Scripture,) and by *works*, which he sets in opposition to it, the *moral law*, or sometimes the *Jewish law*. So that, in fact, the apostle's argument relates not to the present question, but tends only to establish the superiority of Christianity. The moral law, argues the apostle, which claimed on the righteousness of *works*, makes no provision for the pardon of sin. Christianity alone, by opening a door of mercy, gave man hopes of that salvation which the other could not pretend to give.

On renouncing sin, believing the articles of the Christian faith, and keeping God's holy commandments, as far as sinful man can keep them, we are entitled by promise to all the privileges of

\* See Rom. iii. 28. and indeed great part of the epistle.

8

the Gospel ; we become members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven ; we are redeemed through the merits of Christ ; pardoned through the mercies of God ; and rewarded with a blessed immortality.

This account of our baptismal vow concludes with a question, leading us to acknowledge the necessity of observing it ; and to declare our belief, that our only hope of keeping it rests on the spiritual assistance of God.

Having considered our baptismal vow, or the prefatorial part, we come now to the body itself of the catechism, which naturally divides into the two great branches of the vow, *faith* and *obedience* : the first as contained in the creed ; the second in the commandments.

## LECTURE II.

History of creeds—three creeds, established in our church—the apostles' creed—analysis of it—authenticity of Scripture proved—from a chain of the earliest writers, mentioning, and quoting them—from the enemies of Christianity acknowledging their existence—from the rejection of forged gospels and apocrypha—from their heretical translations—from excluding them in public assemblies—from their internal evidence, or argument against their adulteration, from the jealousies of different sects—objection answered.

WHEN the purity of the Christian Religion became mingled with human inventions; and sectaries, instead of judging from the whole tenor of the Gospel, built their narrow systems on detached parts; then it was that different churches thought it necessary to frame *creeds*, with an intention to distinguish *articles of faith* from *matters of opinion*; and the primary idea of a creed was, merely to bring these articles together from various parts of Scripture, into one point of view.

But as corruption spread, and different churches began to found different systems on the same

articles; then each church thought it necessary to proceed a step farther, and to enlarge its creed by explanations, with a view to shew in what sense it received each article; or, in other words, to draw a line between itself, and such churches as it thought held unscriptural tenets.—Hence, we may easily suppose, that many of these creeds were as absurd as the various opinions which gave them birth; and hence, the creeds, even of the purest churches, became clogged with explanatory clauses; which, though of use in some cases, produced mischief in others.—This is the short history of creeds.

In our church three of these ancient creeds are in use; that authenticated by the Council of Nice; the Athanasian; and that which is commonly, though improperly, called the Apostles' Creed: the last of these only the catechism hath retained. It hath stood the test of ages, and (unless in one or two obscure passages) hath been ever thought unexceptionable.

This creed was composed before any of the subtleties of the doctrine of the Trinity were introduced, which tend more to create animosity than to promote piety; in it we simply declare our belief in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, in the Scripture account of the life and sufferings of Christ, in the redemption of the

world

cessary  
creed  
what  
words,  
urches  
lence,  
creeds  
which  
ven of  
expla-  
some  
is the  
s are  
nice;  
only,  
reed:  
ined.  
n one  
ought  
  
f the  
e in-  
osity  
clare  
Holy  
and  
the  
world

world from sin, in the resurrection of the dead,  
and in the eternity of a future state.

But as we shall have frequent occasion in the examination of these points, to appeal to the New Testament, it seems natural first to shew the authenticity of the several books of which it is composed. I shall just therefore touch the heads of argument made use of in this proof.

A series of Christian writers, Irenzeus, Justin Martyr, Tertullian, Clement, Origen, and others, who lived in the ages succeeding those of the apostles, and whose writings are still extant, shew by quoting from those books, which compose the canon of Scripture, as now settled, that they have descended regularly from apostolic times. The very originals indeed of some of them appear to have been preserved till the third century; for Tertullian, who died at the close of

\* The reader will find these proofs at large in Whitby's General Introduction to the Gospels and Epistles; in Jenkins's Reasonableness of Christianity, vol. ii. c. 4. and particularly in Lardner's Credibility of the Gospel History, and a late judicious work on the Evidences of Christianity, by Mr. Paley. He will find likewise proofs in favour of St. Matthew's Gospel, the epistle to the Hebrews, and some other parts of Scripture, which were not at first so universally received.

the second, seems to appeal to them, as then existing\*.

In those early ages indeed the authenticity of scripture was universally acknowledged, both by friends and enemies. Celsus, Julian, and all the eminent Antichristians of those days, no more disputed the authenticity of Scripture than we do that of the Korah. Their objections to the Scriptures, and our objections to the Koran, run in a different channel.

When indeed could a forgery have been introduced? In whatever age we suppose it to have been attempted, we cannot imagine men would have received a book of such consequence, unless the authenticity of it had been confirmed by the tradition and practice of preceding ages, by the testimony of such writers as recorded the history of those times, by the observance of those rites and ceremonies which confirmed and commemo-  
rated the religion it promulgated; in short, by those very marks of authenticity, which it now professes, and which it could not have possessed, unless it had been written at the time it pretends.

\* Perit ecclesias apostolicas, apud quas ipsae authenticitatem literarum eorum recitantur, sonantes vocem, & representantes faciem uniuscujusque. De Prescrip. c. 36. T. b. 1. l. 1.

Besides,

Besides, many gospels and epistles appeared in different ages of the church; and though some of them had a very evangelical cast, and were writings of intrinsic value, yet they were rejected by all Christians, merely because they could not produce proofs of their authenticity.

But besides these common marks of authenticity, the Scripture hath others peculiar to itself: it was translated into all languages: it was every-where dispersed: it was carefully preserved in churches and other public places: it was read not only in private, but universally in the assemblies of the people: its friends had the highest veneration for it, as it contained the charter of all their hopes: and its enemies held it in the utmost aversion, as it combated all their worldly schemes. Nay, to such a degree of rancour were its adver-saries animated, that they often endeavoured to destroy it utterly; which it is not probable they would have attempted, if they could have shewn it to have been spurious: this would have been not only a more liberal, but a more effectual mode of rejection.

To the external evidence, in proof of the authenticity of Scripture, may be added no little degree of strength from its internal evidence; the simplicity of the writers, and of the writings correspond. There is a perfect agreement between

the several parts of each book, and the general tendency of the whole. Four persons at different times, and in different places, write the same history. All their accounts in every material point agree.

An appeal also is often made to extraordinary gifts, which, in those early times, were exercised in the church; and surely no impostor would have been forward in making such an appeal if no such gifts had been known.

Different persons likewise, who were then alive, are mentioned, which afforded a very unnecessary hint for detection, if no such persons had existed.

In many of St. Paul's epistles, also a variety of rites and customs are alluded to, as then in use, which in the next age, after the destruction of Jerusalem, are known to have been abolished. Other customs also are mentioned as existing among the heathen nations of that time, which are verified by profane writers.

But though the Scripture could not be forged, might it not, says the objector, have been adulterated?

This seems impossible from the variety of sects, which sprang up in the earliest times of Christianity. As these, in general, persecuted each other,

other, they would undoubtedly have joined in clamour against any one sect, which had ventured to receive a portion of Scripture as genuine, which was not universally acknowledged.

But is there not a great disagreement among the ancient copies of the New Testament?

In little more than in a few grammatical nice-ties, in one copy a particle is added, which is omitted in another. Of this sort are the greater part of the various readings of the New Testament; and it could not well be otherwise. Inaccuracies of this kind are unavoidable, and may indeed argue inattention in the transcriber; but are surely no argument against the authenticity of the book.

The objector argues with more weight, when he alleges, what he calls the *contradictions* of scripture. One of the sacred writers tells us, that our Saviour ordered his disciples when they preached to take *slaves*; another, that he ordered them to take *none*. This affirms, that at the resurrection *two* angels were seen; that mentions only *one*. And he who will be at the pains of comparing attentively all the evangelical accounts, must be obliged to acknowledge they are far from being perfectly harmonious.—Now, where we

find such manifest contradictions, what are we to say? Is there any dependence on books, in which they are found?

In answer to this objection, it might be no difficult matter to shew, that no real *contradictions* exist; and that the passages which are imagined to contain them, may be reconciled. *Variations* indeed there are; but these have no tendency to overthrow the veracity of the sacred writings: they rather confirm it; inasmuch as they shew, there was no collusion among the writers. They affect neither the *doctrine*, nor the *history*. The *doctrine* is clearly consistent throughout; and the *history* is evidently, in all its material circumstances, the same.

But where is your inspiration then? If the spirit of God directs, it will direct even the minutest truth.

If it only preserve from error in matters of importance, it is surely sufficient. To suppose more, would be to conceive rather grossly of inspiration.

Having thus touched the several arguments which establish the authenticity of Scripture, we might yet the proof of the several articles of our creed on this ground; but as it is one of the various

pleas

pleas of scepticism to *science* and *scripture*. At variance, it will perhaps be more satisfactory to carry our reason along with us in the discussion of these points; and rest them, as we may in all cases, except where our reason is incapable, on rational evidence, as well as on scriptural authority. Both reason and scripture have their origin from the same great Being; and therefore must at least be so harmonious, that one can never contradict the other.



### LECTURE III.

*Being of a God proved—from the creation of the world, implying design in the whole, and in all its parts—from the uniformity observed in the preservation of it—from the universal consent of mankind, whether we suppose it founded on tradition, or consider it as the result of men's own reasoning—atheistical objections from individuals professing atheism—from the apparent injustice of God's government—these objections answered—for just notions of the Deity recourse must be had to Scripture.*

THE creed begins with a profession of our belief in *God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.*

The being of a God is one of those truths which scarce require proof. A proof seems rather an injury, as it supposes *doubt*. However, as young minds, though not sceptical, are uninformed, it may not be improper to select, out of the variety of arguments which evince this great truth, two or three of the most simple.

The

The *existence* of God we prove from the light of *nature*. For his *attributes*, at least in any perfection, we must look into *Scripture*.

A few plain and simple arguments drawn from the *creation* of the world, the *preservation* of it, and the *general consent* of mankind, strike us with more conviction than all the subtleties of *metaphysical deduction*.

We prove the being of a God first from the creation of the world. The world *must* have been produced either by *design* or by *chance*. No other mode of origin can be supposed. Let us see, then, with which of these characters it is impressed. The characteristic of the works of *design* is a *relation of parts*, in order to *produce an end*. The characteristic of the works of *chance* is just the *reverse*. When we see stones, answering each other, laid in the form of a regular building, we immediately say, they were put together by *design*; but when we see them thrown about in a disorderly heap, we say, as confidently, they have been thrown so by *chance*.

Now, in the world, and all its appendages, there is plainly this appearance of *design*. One part relates to another, and the whole together produces an end. The sun, for instance, is connected with the earth, by warming it into a proper heat for the production of its fruits, and furnishing

ishing it with rain and dew. The earth again is connected with all the vegetables which it produces, by providing them with proper soils and juices for their nourishment. These again are connected with animals, by supplying them with food; and the whole together produces the great end of sustaining the lives of innumerable creatures.

Nor is design shewn only in the grand fabric of the world, and all its relative appendages; it is equally shewn in every part. It is seen in every animal, adapted in all its peculiarities to its proper mode of life. It is seen in every vegetable, furnished with parts exactly suited to its situation. In the least, as well as in the greatest of Nature's productions, it is everywhere apparent.

If then the world, and every part of it, are thus marked with the characters of design, there can be no difficulty in acknowledging the Author of such design, of such amazing contrivance and variety, to be a Being of infinite wisdom and power. We call a man ingenious who makes even a common globe, with all the parts of the earth delineated upon it. What shall we say, then, of the Author of the great original itself in all its grandeur, and furnished with all its various inhabitants?

The argument drawn from the *preservation* of the world, is, indeed, rather the last argument advanced

advanced a step farther than a new one. If chance could be supposed to *produce* a regular form, yet it is certainly beyond the highest degree of credulity to suppose it could *continue* this regularity for any time. But we find it has been continued; we find that near 6000 years have made no change in the order and harmony of the world. The sun's action upon the earth hath ever been regular. The production of trees, plants, and herbes, hath ever been uniform. Every seed produces now the same fruit it ever did. Every species of animal life is still the same. Could chance continue this regular arrangement? Could any thing continue it but the hand of an omnipotent God?

Lastly, we see this great truth, the being of a God, witnessed by the *general consent* of mankind.

This general consent must arise either from tradition, or it must be the result of men's own reasoning. Upon either supposition, it is an argument equally strong. If the first supposition be allowed, it will be difficult to assign any source of this tradition, but God himself. If the second, it can scarcely be supposed that all mankind, in different parts of the world, should agree in the belief of a thing which never existed. For it is now pretty well ascertained, from the accounts of travellers, that no nation hath yet been discovered

among

among whom some traces of religious worship have not been found.

Be it so, says the objector; yet still we find single persons, even in civilised countries, and some of them men of enlarged capacities, who have not only had their doubts on this subject, but have proclaimed aloud their disbelief of a divine Being.

We answer, that it is more than probable no man's infidelity on this head was ever thoroughly settled. Bad men rather endeavour to convince themselves, than are really convinced. But even on a supposition that a few such persons could be found \*, what is their testimony against so great a majority as the rest of mankind? The light of the sun is universally acknowledged, though it happen that now and then a man may be born blind.

But since, it seems, there are difficulties in supposing a divine Creator and Preserver of the world,

\* One of the most remarkable anecdotes of atheism is related of a person at Rome, who, it is said, was condemned for his infidelity; but had his life repeatedly offered if he would acknowledge a Deity. He refused, and suffered death with constancy. Mandeville and Voltaire both glory in this hero, as destroying the whole testimony of martyrs. If the fact be true, (though I know not on what evidence it rests,) one should suspect his understanding had been injured; as the whole history of mankind perhaps affords not another instance.

what

what system of things does the atheist suppose attended with fewer? He sees the world produced before him. He sees it *hath been created*, and *is preserved*. Some account of this matter must be given. If ours displease him, let us have his.

The experiment hath been tried. We have had many atheistical creeds; none of which hath stood the test of being handed down with any degree of credit into future times.

The atheist's great argument against a Deity is levelled at the *apparent injustice* of his government. It was an objection of ancient date, and might have had its weight in *heathen times*: but it is one of the blessings which attends Christianity, that it satisfies all our doubts on this head; and gives us a rational and easy solution of this poignant objection. What if we observe an inaccurate distribution of the things of this world? What if virtue be depressed and vice triumphant? It is nothing, says the voice of Religion, to him who believes this life to be an inconsiderable part of his being; who believes he is sent into this world merely to prepare himself for a better. This world, he knows, is intended neither for reward nor punishment. Happiness unquestionably attends virtue even here, and misery vice: but it is not the happiness of a *splendid station*, but of a *peaceful mind*; nor is it the misery of *low circumstances*, but of a *guilty conscience*.

science. The things of this world are not, in their own nature, connected either with happiness or misery. Attended sometimes by one, and sometimes by the other, they are merely the means of trial. One man is tempted with riches, and another with poverty; but God intends neither as the ultimate completion of his will.

Besides, if worldly prosperity even was the indication of God's favour; yet good men may have failings and imprudences enough about them to deserve misfortune, and bad men virtues, which may deserve success. Why should imprudence, though joined with virtue, partake of its reward? Or the generous purpose share in the punishment, though connected with vice?

Thus, then, we see the being of a God is the *creed of Nature*. But though Nature could investigate the *simple truth*, she could not preserve it from *error*. Nature merely takes her notions from what she sees, and what she hears; and hath ever moulded her gods in the likeness of things in heaven, and things on earth. Hence every part of the creation, animate and inanimate, hath, by turns, been an object of worship; and even the most refined nations, we know, had gross conceptions on this head. The wisest of them indeed, by observing the wonders of creation, could clothe the Deity with wisdom and power; but they

they could go no farther.' The virtues of their heroes afforded them the highest ideas of perfection; and with these they arrayed their gods, mixing also with their virtues such vices as are found in the characters of the best of men.

For just notions of God, we must have recourse then to Revelation alone. Revelation removes all these absurdities. It dispels the clouds of ignorance; and unveils the divine Majesty, as far as it can be the object of human contemplation. The lax notions of libertinism on one hand, which make the Deity an inobservant governor, and the gloomy ideas of superstition on the other, which suppose him to be a dark, malignant being, are equally exposed. Here we are informed of the omniscience and omnipresence of God. Here we learn that his wisdom and power are equalled by his goodness, and that his mercy is over all his works. In short, we learn from Revelation that we are in the hands of a Being, whose knowledge we cannot evade, and whose power we cannot resist; who is merciful and good to all his creatures; and will be ever ready to assist and reward those who endeavour to conform themselves to his will; but whose justice at the same time, accompanying his mercy, will punish the bold and careless sinner in proportion to his guilt.

## LECTURE IV.

*Belief in Jesus Christ—that such a person lived, and  
he was the author of a new religion, proved from  
Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny—that this person  
was the Messiah, proved from miracles and  
prophecies.*

**A**FTER professing our belief in God, the creed proceeds with a profession of our belief in *Jesus Christ his Son our Lord.*

A person celebrated as Jesus Christ was, and born in the Roman empire, we may suppose would naturally find a place among some of the Roman writers. It may not be amiss, therefore, to introduce the evidence we are about to collect, with the testimony of some of the more eminent of those who have mentioned him. They will at least inform us that such a person lived at the time we assert, and that he was the author of a new religion.—I shall quote only Suetonius, Tacitus, and Pliny.

Suetonius \* tells us, that *the Emperor Claudius drove all the Jews from Rome, who, at the instiga-*

\* *In vita Claud. Cæs.*

tion of one Christ, were continually making disturbances.

Tacitus\*, speaking of the persecutions of Christians, tells us, that the author of that name was Christ, who was put to death by Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius.

Pliny's † testimony is more large. It is contained in a letter to the Emperor Trajan, desiring his instructions with regard to Christians. He blames their obstinacy in refusing to sacrifice to the Roman deities; but from their own confession can draw nothing, but that they assemble on a certain day before sun-rise; that they pay divine honours to Christ as a God; that they bind themselves by a sacrament not to steal, nor to commit adultery, nor to deceive; and that, after the performance of these rites, they join in one common meal. He examined, he says, two of them by torture; but still he finds nothing obnoxious in their behaviour, except their absurd superstitions. He thinks, however, the matter should be inquired into; for Christianity had brought religion into great disuse. The markets were crowded with victims, and scarcely a purchaser appeared.

These writers afford us sufficient testimony, that Jesus Christ lived at the time we assert, and that he was the author of a new religion. They had

\* Lib. xv.

† Lib. x.

oppor-

opportunities of being well informed ; could have no interest in falsifying ; were no converts to the new sect, but talk of Christ only as they would of any singular person whom they had occasion to mention. Their testimony therefore is beyond cavil.

Let us now proceed a step farther, and look into the Scripture-evidence of Jesus ; which proves not only his existence, but that he is our Lord, or the Messiah ; not only that he was the author of a new religion, but that this religion is true.

Upon examining the Scripture-evidence on this head, we find the greatest stress laid on miracles and prophecies ; both of which are direct appeals to God on a claim to supernatural power \*. And though both these modes of evidence are calculated as well for us who live in remoter times, as for those who lived in the earliest, yet the evidence from miracles seems more particularly addressed to

\* The heathen had the same idea of a miracle, and ascribed every thing he saw, which was contrary to the common order of Nature, to some miraculous power. Thunder issuing from a stormy sky was in the usual course of things : but when

—de parte serena

Intonuit—

it was beyond nature, and immediately became a miracle.

them ;

them, as that from prophecy is to us. They were the eye-witnesses of the miracles of the Gospel, of which we have only the evidence at second-hand: whereas prophecy is a mode of evidence, which increases through every age. The early Christians had it in part, but to us this amazing web is still more unfolded, and more of its wonderful texture displayed.—Let us examine each in its order.

Among the eye-witnesses of the gospel-miracles, were many learned men, as well as unlearned. The former had opportunity and abilities to examine the works before them, to trace out fraud, if any such were latent; and did unquestionably receive them with all that circumspection which was due to such wonderful exhibitions before they embraced the Christian faith; while the most ignorant spectator was a competent judge of matter of fact; and many of our Saviour's miracles were such, as from the nature of the facts themselves, must stand clear of all imputation of fraud.

It had a strange sound, that a *crucified malefactor was the Saviour of the world*; and we cannot suppose, that any man, much less that a multitude of men, would embrace such a belief without clear conviction; especially as no worldly advantage lay on the side of this belief. The convert even renounced the world and embraced a life of persecution.

secution. Let us consider the single miracle of Christ's resurrection. Jesus had frequently mentioned it before his death; and the thing was so far in general credited, that the sepulchre was sealed, and an armed guard appointed to watch it. We may well suppose, therefore, that his favourers would naturally, on this occasion, reason thus: Jesus hath now put his pretensions on a fair issue. He hath told us, he will arise from the dead on the third day. Here then let us suspend our judgment, and wait the result. Three days will determine whether he be an impostor, or the real Messiah.—As it is natural to suppose the favourers of Jesus would reason after his death in a manner like this, it is beyond credibility that any of them would have continued his disciples had they found him falsifying in this point: but we know they did continue his disciples after this. We know also that many proselytes, convinced by this very event, embraced the Christian religion. We have every reason therefore to believe, that they were fully satisfied. His miracles were to them a sufficient proof of his pretensions. All candid men would have acquiesced as they did; and in their belief we have a very strong foundation for ours.

Again, with regard to prophecy, we observe, that the writers of the Old Testament, seem in various

various parts to characterise some extraordinary person, who was in process of time to make his appearance in the world. The marks are peculiar, and can be neither mistaken nor misapplied. *He was to be born of a virgin—he was to turn the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just—though dignified with the character of a prince, he was to be a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief—though described to be without sin, he was to be numbered with transgressors—his hands and his feet were to be pierced—he was to be made an offering for sin—and was never to see corruption.* These prophecies were published many hundred years before the birth of Christ, and had been all along in the hands not only of the Jews, but of all men of letters. The Old Testament had been early translated into the Greek language, and received into the politest libraries of those times.

With these ideas let us open the New Testament; and it is obvious that no picture can be more like its original than these prophecies of Christ in one Testament are to his history in the other. Here we see that extraordinary virgin-birth unravelled.—Here we see a life spent in turning the hearts of the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.—Here we find the prince of his people a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.—Here we see the Lord of righteousness

numbered with transgressors—we see his hands and his feet pierced—we see him made an offering for sin—and we see realized that extraordinary idea of *death without corruption*.

It were an easy matter to carry this comparison through a more minute detail of circumstances; but I mean only to trace the outlines of this great resemblance. To complete the picture would be a copious work.

Besides those predictions which related immediately to the life and death of Christ, there were many others which deserve notice: Among these, the two great leading prophecies were the calling of the Gentiles and the dispersion of the Jews.

The calling of the Gentiles was one of the earliest prophecies of the Old Testament. The Jews were distinguished as the favourite people of God, and they were sufficiently elated by that distinction; but if they had attended closely to their prophets, they might have discovered that all the prophecies which described the happy state of the church, had evidently a more distant prospect than to them. Those early promises, in particular, which were repeated to the patriarchs, were not merely confined to their posterity, but included *all the nations of the earth*\*. And when

\* See Gen. xii. 3. xviii. 18. xxii. 18. xxvi. 4.

the later prophets, as the great event approached, spoke a plainer and a more intelligible language; the whole nation might have understood, as Simeon and some of the most intelligent of them did understand, that *a light was sprung up to lighten the Gentiles.*

The prophecy of the dispersion of the Jewish nation is also very ancient, being attributed by Moses to the patriarch Jacob. *The sceptre shall not depart from Judah until Shiloh come.* Whatever may be the precise meaning of the word *sceptre* in the original, and though it may not perhaps properly signify that idea of regal power which it conveys to our ears; yet it certainly means some badge of authority that implies a formed and settled government: and as to the word *Shiloh*, all commentators, Jewish as well as Christian, explain it to mean the Messiah. The sense, therefore, of the prophecy, is plainly this—that the Jews should continue in the form of a society till the time of the Messiah. Accordingly we find, that, soon after Christ's death, the sceptre did depart from Judah; the Jews lost all form of a political society, and are a singular instance of a people scattered over the whole earth, preserved to this day separate from all other people, and yet without a settlement anywhere.

Our Saviour's prophecy of the growth of his church, is likewise among the more remarkable

predictions. He told his disciples, that his religion was like a grain of mustard seed, which was the least of all seeds; but when it grew up it should become a great tree, and the fowls of the air should lodge in the branches of it. He told them also, that the gates of hell should never prevail against it.

The Jewish religion was continually enforced by the idea of a jealous God watching over it, and threatening judgments from heaven on every transgression. The divine authority was stamped openly upon it. The people trembled and worshipped. When the impostor Mahomet appeared, he could not indeed enforce his religion by divine judgments, but he did it by temporal. He drew his sword and held it to the breasts of his opposers; while he promised to the obedient a full gratification of their passions.

But in the Christian religion nothing of this kind appeared; no temporal judgments threatened on one hand, no sensual indulgences allure on the other. A few desponding ignorant mechanics, the disciples of a person crucified as a common malefactor, were all the parade with which this religion was ushered into the world, and all the human assistance which it had to boast; and yet this religion, which opposed the strongest prejudices of the world, and was opposed by the greatest princes, made its way in a few years from a remote corner through the whole Roman empire:

empire: thus was our Saviour's prophecy in opposition to all human calculation exactly fulfilled. The least of all seeds became a spreading tree; and a religion was established, which, we believe from prophecy, will more and more continue to spread.

But although the church of Christ could not be destroyed, it was corrupted; and in a course of years fell from its genuine purity. This corrupt state of it, the delusions of popery, the efforts of reformation, and various other circumstances relating to it, are not unreasonably understood to be held forth in the prophetic parts of the New Testament.

But I forbear to dwell on such prophecies as are not obvious enough to carry general conviction, though many of them have been well explained by those\* who are versed in the histories to which they allude. Future times will, in all probability, reflect a stronger light upon them. Some of the great prophecies, which we have just considered, shone but with a feeble ray during the times they were fulfilling, though they strike us now with so strong a light.

\* See Bishop Newton's *Dissertations*, and Bishop Hurd's *Sermons on Prophecy*.

## LECTURE V.

*Objections to miracles and prophecies—marks of distinction between true and false miracles—between true and false prophecies.—The truth of religion founded on the combined force of its whole evidence.*

AGAINST the evidence arising from *miracles* and *prophecy*, we are well aware of what the deist objects, that false miracles have been wrought by impostors, and fallacious prophecies given out by oracles; and that we cannot suppose the miracles and prophecies of the Bible to be better founded; or, in any degree, a more respectable criterion of truth.

We answer in the first place, that the falsehood of one religion is no argument against the truth of another. Every religion must stand by its own evidence.—But, to be more particular, the true miracle must fall under the examination of men's natural senses\*. When a priest displays a phial full of blood, which sometimes congeals, and sometimes liquifies, he has no right to our credit, unless he submit his phial to our examination.

\* See Leslie's Short Method with Deists.

But

But when a man is raised from the dead ; when a man is cured of blindness on a word's speaking ; when two or three thousand people are fed by a pittance, there can be no deception : our senses, which are the only competent judges, have the means of judging.

Secondly, the true miracle must be performed before credible witnesses. A busines huddled up in a cloister, before a few interested monks, is not properly attested. But when an action is performed before the public eye, as most of the miracles of Christ were ; or before witnesses who have totally exculpated themselves of having any end but that of truth, we have all the attestation we can reasonably desire.

Thirdly, the true miracle must have an elevated end in view. When we hear of a miracle abetting the interest of some little corrupt society, we cannot suppose the Almighty concerned in such an event : But the miracles of the gospel had other ends. They were employed to usher in an event, on which depended the salvation of mankind.

Fourthly, the true miracle must be handed down by authentic records, which take their rise at the time when the miracle was performed. A vague tradition, or an undated legendary tale is no record ; but the Christian may with great pro-

priety appeal to the scriptures, which he first proves were written at the time when the events they relate were performed,

Lastly, the torture of question tends greatly to authenticate the real miracle. The false one abhors inquiry. At the reformation detections were abundant; but after the most rigorous question, the gospel miracles have maintained their credit through the space of seventeen hundred years.

Having thus pointed out a few topics of distinction between true and false miracles, it is as easy to point them out between true and false prophecies. The true prophecy, like the true miracle, has a more elevated end, and a more enlarged plan.

When we meet with a prophecy, the avowed end of which is to satisfy some trivial curiosity, or abet the designs of some ambitious leader, suspicion must needs take the alarm. This was evidently the character of the ancient oracles. However directed, whether by bad men or bad spirits, they certainly spoke as they were paid or intimidated; but in the prophecies of the Bible we find a different style. Marked neither by interested views, nor by servile compliances, they advance uniformly the same great end which its  
miracles

miracles also proposed, the salvation of a ruined world.

Secondly, neither men nor evil spirits ever gave an instance of the power of foretelling future events upon any enlarged plan. What were the decisions of oracles, but quibbling answers to some present question? Or opinions to which human foresight was equal? Or at best the predictions of events confined to some short space of time? When did any oracle foretel an event a thousand years before its completion? Or from which of them do we find a series of prophecy issuing through different ages, the whole concurring in one point; and yet in every particular exactly fulfilled?

Thus much in answer to the *particular* objections of the deist; but let me farther add, (as a caution against his arts,) that we mean not to ground the truth of our religion upon *detached parts*, even on miracles, and prophecies considered alone; but on the *whole scheme* and *combined force* of *its evidence*. In this way we judge of every thing else. Who would judge of a building from a column, or of a country from a field? And yet in this partial view, the deist chiefly forms his cavils, and imagines he has gained a complete victory, when he tells us, that the miracles of the gospel are marked with the same characters as the

sorceries of evil spirits, and its prophecies are just as incredible as the divinations of oracles. We should recommend it to him, therefore, to enlarge his views, and examine the whole chain of evidence from the earliest accounts of time.

Let him first consider that remarkable promise of *bruising the serpent's head*, which was given as soon as the transgression was committed. This was the first dawn of hope which God vouchsafed to a guilty world; and though the figurative language, under which it is couched, was obscure, yet its meaning, though not fully understood, was easily conceived to contain some promise of victory over the adversary of mankind.

In a few ages after, its meaning was more opened; and the hopes of an infant-world, thus raised, were increased by a very remarkable promise, that, in the issue of one of the patriarchs, *all the nations of the earth should be blessed*. And what is still more remarkable, this promise was repeated three several times. Here, not only a victory over an enemy was announced, but a state of happiness in some shape was declared.

Let him next trace these hopes still increasing, and opening more and more through every age. In the patriarchal history, the sacrifice of Isaac, the deliverance from Egypt, the promised land, and a variety of other incidents, have much more

dignity and meaning, when we consider them not barely as history, but as typical events leading the mind forward in the contemplation of some great scheme.

Still more will he find these hopes excited by the types and ceremonies of the Jewish law, which seem to have had little meaning if they had no concealed one; and by sacrifices, which prevailed over the greatest part of the known world, all pointing strongly at a particular mode of salvation, through a mediator, an atonement, and an offering for sin.

When he has examined these silent notices, let him next survey the prophetic writers of the old Testament. Here he will find the same ideas, only expressed in bolder language; and a Saviour now pointed out, as we have \* just seen, by very peculiar characteristics.

He will find too among the heathen philosophers, historians, and poets †, many very remarkable

\* See page 31.

† Plato, who lived above 400 years before Christ, is one of the earliest writers in whom we have any traits of this kind. He tells us, that " it is necessary a divine Instructor should teach " us to pray; " (Alcib. ii.) " that as every creature is governed " by a nature superior to its own, as beasts are by men, so it is " necessary that this divine Instructor, who teaches man what " he could not know himself, must be of a nature superior to man,

able traits, however they came by them, of the expectation of some great instructor.

Thus

---

“ man, that is, divine;” (De leg. l. 4.) “ that he must come recommended to us by none of the advantages of this world, but by virtue alone; that the wickedness of men would not bear his instructions and reproof; and that within three or four years after he began to preach, he should be persecuted, imprisoned, scourged, and put to death.” (De Repub. ii.) One should imagine Plato had made a transcript from the 53d chapter of Isaiah.

Suetonius, in the life of Vespasian, has this remarkable expression: “ Pererebuerat, oriente toto, vetus, & constans opinio, esse in fatis, ut ex tempore Judæa profecti rerum potirentur.” — Tacitus (lib. v.) speaks almost the same language: “ Pluribus persuasio inerat, antiquis fæcerdotum literis contineri, ipso tempore fore ut valesceret oriens, profecti. Judæa rerum potirentur.” — Suetonius also, in the Life of Augustus, (cap. 94.) alluding to the same opinion, tells us that a child in such a year should be brought forth, who should be a king of the Romans. Upon which, says he, “ Senatum exterritum censuisse, ne quis illo anno genitus educaretur: eos autem, qui gravidas uxores habereat, (quo ad se quisq. speat traherat,) curasse, ne senatus consulum ad æxarium deserretur.” — It was an opinion also of this kind that spirited up Lentulus to aid Catiline’s conspiracy. The sibylline oracles spoke of a king about to rise at that time, which different people interpreted in different ways; and Lentulus, as his interests led, supposed the oracle had respect to the Cornelian family. This his enemies brought as a crime against him, taxing him with certain vaunting speeches, “ Quos ille habere solitus erat, ex libris sibyllinis, regnum Romanum tribus Cornelius portendi.” (Sal. Bell. Cat.) All these notions

Tully,

Thus prepared, let him take up the New Testament, and compare all these notices and prophecies

Tully, as a philosopher, ridicules. "Quidvis potius ex illis libris, " quam regem proferant; quem Romæ post hæc nec Di, nec " homines esse patientur."—Among the more remarkable passages in antiquity on this subject is the Pollio of Virgil. I shall not enter into any inquiry about the Cumæan Sibyl; whether Virgil got the substance of these verses from some of her remains? Nor, if he did, how she came by them? It is enough for my purpose, that a strong intimation of an extraordinary personage to be born at this time, is found in the works of a heathen poet. Some of the more remarkable passages I shall quote.

" Magnus ab integro seclorum nascitur ordo.  
 " Jam redit et Virgo; redeunt Saturnia regna:  
 " Jam nova progenies celo demittitur alto.  
 " Tu modo nascenti pueru, quo ferrea primum  
 " Desinet, ac toto surget gens aurea mundo,  
 " Castra fave Lucina—  
 " Te duce, si qua manent sceleris vestigia nostri,  
 " Irrita perpetua solvent formidine terras.  
 " Ille Desum vitam accipiet,—  
 " Pacatumq. reget patriis virtutibus orbem.  
 " Occidet et serpens."—

The following lines,

" — Flavescit campus apista,  
 " Incultisq. rubens pendebit sentibus uva.  
 " — Nec magnos metuent armenta leones,"

seem to be a transcript from the prophet Isaiah's ideas, expressing the tranquillity and happiness which shall take possession of all nature upon the coming of the Messiah. " Instead of the " thorn

phecies with the history of Christ. Has he the candour to acknowledge any light reflected from one to the other? Can he account for all these remarkable resemblances (remarkable they certainly are) in any more consistent way? or will he venture to allow that a chain of evidence descends thus far unbroken?

If he hath weighed all this evidence with serious attention, it will not, perhaps, now give him so much offence to examine the miracles of the gospel. As the united parts of a regular plan, they may probably appear to him in a more advantageous light; and though he may not be inclined to allow them that consequence for which

---

“ thorn shall come up the fir tree, and instead of the briar shall  
 “ come up the myrtle tree.—The wolf shall dwell with the  
 “ lamb; the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the  
 “ young lion, and the fatling together.”

I shall conclude these passages from the ancient writers of Greece and Rome, with one, which is said to be exactly translated from Confusius; though for myself I rather doubt its authenticity. “ How sublime are the ways of the Holy One! “ What a noble course is opening before us! What laws, rites,  
 “ and sacred solemnities! But how shall men observe them, if  
 “ HE do not set the example? HIS COMING alone can pre-  
 “ pare us for them! The paths of virtue will never be fre-  
 “ quented, till the HOLY ONE consecrate them by his own  
 “ footsteps.” See Memoirs concerning the History, &c. of the  
 Chinese, by the Missionaries of Pekin, vol. i. Paris, 1776.

we contend, yet he must certainly allow they make another link in this chain of evidence, to which they give and from which they receive additional strength.

He may also consider, that from the writers of the New Testament issued a new series of prophecies, which after-ages have seen as exactly fulfilled as those of the old.

Having thus examined the external evidence of the Christian religion, let him consider farther its strong internal evidence, arising from many sources, but particularly from the purity of its doctrine. Let him candidly ask himself, if he does not think the Christian religion bears all those marks of holiness and purity which he might expect from a revelation of God's will? What religion was so calculated to promote the happiness of mankind as the Christian? All solicitude about the things of this world, all ambitious desires, every little sinister interest, and with these every ground of contention and every source of unhappiness, is removed; while every motive to benevolence is inculcated. In a word, to make ourselves as happy as this world can make us, we need only become Christians.

Nor let him end his inquiries here: let him next consider that this religion was sealed by the blood of innumerable martyrs. For though martyrdom,

tyrdom, in general, is rather an evidence of the sincerity of the sufferer, than of the truth of the opinion, yet the case of the early martyrs was different. They suffered, not in support of opinions, but in attestation of facts, or of original information, in which they could not be deceived.

Let his views open still farther, and discover to him this religion (agreeably to the predictions of its author) taking possession of great part of the known world, against all the opposition of its enemies, and without any worldly assistance: let him see the heathen deities in all places giving ground before it, their rites and ceremonies abolished, and the use of sacrifice everywhere ceasing upon the completion of its end.—Let him have recourse for these things to his prophane history.

There also let him be informed of the total dispersion of the Jewish nation, agreeably to the predictions of his Bible; a nation, which having been a mere vehicle to introduce the Christian religion, immediately disperses, and loses all form of a political society when that religion becomes established.

Let him seriously and attentively examine all this chain of evidence, (to which indeed other links might be added,) and he must acknowledge that it is not a pert cavil against some particular miracle; a quaint objection to some obscure text;

or

or an illiberal jest on the mysteries of religion that can break it. It hangs so strong, so firm, and so connected, from the very beginning of time to this present moment, that he who examines it thoroughly link by link, and the connection of the whole, cannot but acquiesce in this accumulation of evidence; and admire the wonderful contrivance and wisdom that have been employed in dispelling every objection, and in grounding the Christian religion upon so firm a basis.

## LECTURE VI.

*Conception and birth of Christ—Virgin Mary—circumstances and reality of Christ's death—descent into hell—the resurrection of Christ—not inconsistent with reason—the fact stated—the plea of the disciples—that of the chief priests refuted—all of Pilate—modern objections examined—that the whole was a pious fraud—that it was performed only before a few chosen witnesses—bounds of evidence—Christ did not lie three complete days and nights in the grave.*

We have now shewn on what foundation we believe the second article of our creed; let us next consider the remaining articles: the history of Christ as delivered in Scripture, and the benefits which he procured for us; the assistance of the Holy Spirit; the remission of our sins; and everlasting life.

First, then, we believe that Christ was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. The manner of this miraculous conception we inquire not into. It is a point not only beyond the limits of human inquiry, but to us unimportant.

important. We believe just the scripture-account of it, and assure ourselves, that if it had concerned us, it would have been more plainly revealed.— One thing, however, we may observe on this head, that nothing is said in Scripture like paying divine honours to the Virgin Mary. Those rites are totally of popish origin.

We further believe, that Christ *suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and buried; and that he descended into hell*—that is, we declare our belief of the scripture-account of the circumstances and the reality of Christ's death.

To make an action clear, it is necessary, first, to establish its *date*. This is usually done by ranging it under the magistrate who then presided, the time of whose government is always registered in some public record. Thus we believe that Christ's death happened when Pontius Pilate was governor of Judea, and it is in this way that Tacitus \* dates it. We believe also, with regard to the manner of his death, that he was *crucified*; that he died as really as any mortal ever did; and that he was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea †.

\* See page 27.

† Maiah foretold he should "make his grave with the rich." And St. Matthew tells us, that *εψει ταφης, ελθει ανθρωπος.* Matt. xxvii. 57. Isaiah liii. 9.

The *descent into hell* is undoubtedly a more obscure expression than might be wished in a creed; and was not indeed added till many ages after the creed was first composed \*. But as creeds are human compositions, we believe this and every other difficulty only as consistent with scripture. The expression seems to have been added merely that we may the more strongly express our belief of the reality of Christ's death. This we do, when we express our belief of the separation of his soul and body. *He was buried, and descended into hell.* The first expression may probably relate to his body, which was laid in the grave; the second to his soul, which passed into the *place of departed spirits.*

We farther believe, that *on the third day he rose again from the dead.* The resurrection of Christ from the dead is a point of the utmost importance to Christians. On the certainty of Christ's resurrection depend all hopes of our own. On this article, therefore, we shall be more large.

That the body was dead, and safely lodged in the tomb, and afterwards conveyed out of it, was agreed on, both by those who opposed, and by those who favoured the resurrection. In the circumstances of the latter fact they differ widely.

\* See Bingham's *Antiquities*, vol. iii. c. 3.

The disciples tell their story ; a very plain and simple one : that, scarcely expecting the event, notwithstanding their master had himself foretold it, they were surprised with an account that the body was gone ; that they found afterwards, to their great astonishment, that their master was again alive ; that they had been several times with him ; and appealed for the truth of what they said to great numbers, who, as well as themselves, had seen him after his resurrection.

The chief priests, on the other side, declared the whole to be a forgery ; asserting, that the plain matter of fact was, the disciples came by night, and stole the body away while the soldiers slept.

Such a tale, unsupported by evidence, would be admitted in no court of justice. It has not even the air of probability. Can it be supposed that the disciples, who had fled with terror when they might have defended their master's life, would venture, in the face of an armed guard, to carry off his dead body ? Or is it more probable that they found the whole guard asleep, when we know that the vigilance of centinels is secured by the strictest discipline ? — Besides, what advantage could arise from such an attempt ? If they miscarried, it was certain ruin both to them and their cause ; if they succeeded, it is difficult to say what

use they could make of their success. Unless they could have produced their dead body alive, the second error would be worse than the first. Their master's prophecy of his own resurrection was an unhappy circumstance; yet still it was wrapped in a veil of obscurity. But if his disciples endeavoured to prove its completion, it was their business to look well to the event. A detection would be such a comment on their master's text as would never be forgotten. When a cause depends on falsehood, every body knows the less it is moved the better.

This *was* the case of the other side. Obscurity there was wanted. If the chief priests had any proof, why did they not produce it? Why was not the dead body exposed? Why were not the disciples taken up, and examined upon the fact? They never absconded. Why were they not judicially tried? Why was not the trial made public? And why were not authentic memorials of the fraud handed down to posterity, as authentic memorials were of the fact recorded at the very time and place where it happened? Christianity never wanted enemies to propagate its disparagement.—But nothing of this kind was done. No proof was attempted; except, indeed, the testimony of men asleep. The disciples were never questioned on the fact; and the chief priests

priests rested satisfied with spreading an inconsistent rumour among the people, impressed merely by their own authority.

Whatever records of heathen origin remain, evince the truth of the resurrection. One is very remarkable: Pontius Pilate sent the Emperor Tiberius a relation of the death and resurrection of Christ; which were recorded at Rome, as usual, among other provincial matters. This intelligence made so great an impression, it seems, on the emperor, that he referred it to the senate, whether Jesus Christ of Judea should not be taken into the number of the Roman gods? — The credit of this fact is founded on the testimony of Justin Martyr and Tertullian, two learned heathens, and afterwards profelytes in the age succeeding Christ. In their *apologies*\* still extant, one of which was made to the senate of Rome, the other to a Roman governor, they both appeal to these records of Pontius Pilate as then generally known; which we cannot conceive such able apologists would have done, if no such records had ever existed †.

Having

\* *Just. Mart. Apol. ad Anton. P.—Tertull. Apol. cap. xv.*

† That the acts of Pilate, and his letter to Tiberius, as we now have them, are spurious, is allowed by all learned men. We contend only that such acts did formerly exist. If the reader

Having seen what was of old objected to the resurrection of Christ, let us next see the objections of modern deists.

And, first, we have the stale objection, that nothing is more common among the propagators of every new religion, than to delude their ignorant proselytes with idle stories. What a variety of inconsistent tales did the votaries of heathenism believe? What absurdities are adopted into the Mahometan creed? To what strange facts do the vulgar papists give credit? And can we suppose better of the resurrection of Christ, than that it was one of those pious frauds intended merely to impose on the people, and advance the credit of the new sect?

This objection, if it prove any thing, proves too much. Are all stories to be discredited, because idle stories have been sometimes propagated? But, I trust, this objection hath already been answered, when we endeavoured to establish certain topics of distinction, between true and false miracles\*.

---

reader wishes to see the evidence in favour of them collected in one point of view, I refer him to the article of "Christ's suffering under Pontius Pilate," in Bishop Pearson's Exposition of the Creed, and Dr. Lardner's Testimonies, vol. i. p. 310.

\* See page 36.

Others have objected Christ's *partial* discovery of himself after his resurrection. If he had boldly shewn himself to the chief priests, or publicly to all the people, we might have had a more rational foundation for our belief. But as he had only for his *witnesses* on this occasion a few of his *chosen companions*, as we are told, the thing has certainly a more secret appearance than might be wished.

This insinuation is founded on a passage in the *Acts of the Apostles*, in which it is said, that *God shewed him openly, not to all the people, but unto witnesses chosen before God* \*. The question turns on the meaning of *witnesses chosen before of God*. Certainly such persons only were meant as were intended by *particular designation* to be the *witnesses* of this event. Others might see him if they pleased; but this *particular designation* was confined to the *chosen witnesses*. And is there any thing more in this than we see daily in all legal proceedings? Do we not procure *witnesses*, *appointed to this purpose*, in all our deeds and writings? — Let us not, however, answer the objection by an arbitrary explanation of the text, but let us compare this explanation with the matter of fact.

On the morning of the resurrection, the apostles, who ran to the sepulchre to make themselves

\* *Acts, x. 41.*

acquainted with what they had heard, received a message from their Master injoining them to meet him in Galilee. It does not appear that this message was conveyed with any secrecy; it is rather probable it was not, and that the disciples told it to as many as they met. The women, it is expressly said, told it *to the eleven and all the rest*. Who the *rest* were does not appear: but it is plain from the sequel, that the thing was generally known; and that as many as chose either to satisfy their faith, or gratify their curiosity, repaired for that purpose to Galilee. And thus we find St. Peter making a distinction between the *voluntary* and the *chosen witness*; between those *who had companied with the apostles all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among them from his baptism till his ascension*, and those who were *ordained to be the witnesses of his resurrection* \*.

St. Paul goes farther, and in express words tells us, that Christ was seen †, *after his resurrection, of above five hundred brethren at once*; and it is probable, from the expression *at once*, that he was seen at different times by many more.

If, then, Christ thus appeared in Galilee to as many as chose to see him; or even if he appeared

\* Acts, i. 21.

† 1 Cor. xv.

only

only to five hundred people, of whom St. Paul tells us the greatest part were still alive when he wrote his epistle, there can surely be no reasonable cause of offence at his appearing, besides these, to a few of his *chosen companions*, who attended by express appointment as persons designed to record the event.

In fact, if the same method be pursued in this inquiry which is usual in all others, the evidence of these *chosen companions* is all that is necessary. Here are twelve men produced (in general three or four are thought sufficient) on whose evidence the fact depends. Are they competent witnesses? Have they those marks about them which characterize men of integrity? Can they be challenged on any rational exception? If not, their evidence is as strictly legal, as full, and as satisfactory, as any reasonable man can require. — But in this great cause, we see the evidence is carried still farther. Here are five hundred persons waiting without, ready to add their testimony, if any one should require it, to what has already been more than legally proved. So that the argument even addresses itself to that absurd distinction, which we often find in the cavils of infidelity, between *rem certam* and *rem certissimam*.

On the whole, then, we may affirm boldly, that this great event of the resurrection of Christ

is founded on evidence equal to the importance of it. If we expect still more, our answer is upon record: *If we believe not Moses and the prophets, God's ordinary mode of evidence, neither will we be persuaded though one rose from the dead.* There must be bounds in all human evidence; and he who will believe nothing, unless he have every possible mode of proof, must be an infidel in almost every transaction of life. With such persons there is no reasoning. They who are not satisfied because Christ did not appear in open parade at Jerusalem, would have farther asked, if he had appeared in the manner they expected, why he did not appear to every nation upon earth? Or, perhaps, why he did not shew himself to every individual?

To these objections may be added a scruple, taken from a passage of Scripture, in which it is said, that *Christ should lie three days and three nights in the heart of the earth*: whereas, in fact, he only lay two nights, one whole day, and a part of two others.

But no figure in speech is more common than that of putting a part for the whole. In the Hebrew language, perhaps, this licence is more admissible

admissible than in any other. A day and a night complete one whole day; and as our Saviour lay in the ground, a *part* of each of these three portions of time, he might be said, by an easy liberty of speech, to have lain the *whole*.

## LECTURE VII.

*Christ's ascension into heaven—last judgment—fruitless inquiries relative to it—Scripture representation of this great event—belief in the Holy Ghost—its operations—Scripture doctrine of the assistance we receive from it—heathen opinions on this point.*

**W**E believe farther, that Christ *ascended into heaven, and sitteth on the right hand of God.*

Christ's ascension into heaven rests on the same kind of proof as his resurrection. Both of them are events which the apostles were *ordained to witness.* But though their testimony in this case, as well as in the resurrection, is certainly a legal proof, and fully sufficient for any reasonable man, yet this does not exclude the voluntary testimony of others. It is evident, that the apostles were not the sole eye-witnesses of this event; for when St. Peter called together the first assembly of the church to choose a successor to Judas Iscariot, he tells them, they must necessarily choose one out of those men who had been witnesses of all that Christ did from his baptism till his ascension: and

we

we find there were in that meeting an hundred and twenty persons \* thus qualified.

With regard to *the right hand of God*, it is a scriptural expression used in conformity to our gross conceptions; not intended to imply any distinction of parts, but merely an idea of pre-eminence.

We believe farther, that *Christ shall come to judge the quick and the dead.*

This article contains the most serious truth that ever was revealed to mankind. In part it was an article of the heathen creed. To unenlightened nature it seemed probable that, as we had reason given us for a guide, we should hereafter be accountable for its abuse; and the poets, who were the prophets of early days, and durst deliver those truths under the veil of fable, which the philosopher kept more to himself, give us many traits of the popular belief on this subject †. But the Gospel alone threw a full light upon this awful truth.

In examining this great article, the curiosity of human nature, ever delighting to explore unbeaten

\* See Acts, i. 15.

† See particularly the 6th Book of Virgil's *AEn.*

regions, hath often been tempted into fruitless inquiries; scrutinizing the *time* of this event, and settling with vain precision the *circumstances* of it. All curiosity of this kind is idle at least, if not presumptuous. When the Almighty hath thrown a veil over any part of his dispensation, it is the folly of man to endeavour to draw it aside.

Let us then leave all fruitless inquiries on this great subject, and employ our thoughts chiefly on such circumstances of it as most concern us. Let us animate our hopes with the soothing reflection, that we have our sentence, in a manner, in our own power; that the same gracious Gospel, which directs our lives, will direct the judgment we receive; that the same gracious person shall be our judge who died for our sins; and that his goodness, we are assured, will still operate towards us, and make the kindest allowances for our infirmities.

But lest our hopes should be too buoyant, let us consider, on the other hand, what an awful detail against us will then appear. The subject of that grand inquiry will be all our transgressions of known duty, all our omissions of knowing better, our secret intentions, our indulged evil thoughts, the sad motives which often accompany our most plausible actions; and, we are told, even our idle words. *He that bath ears to bear, let him bear.*

Then

Then shall it be known whether we have answered the great ends of life ; whether we have made this world subservient to a better ; whether we have prepared ourselves for a state of happiness in heaven, by endeavouring to communicate happiness to our fellow-creatures on earth ; whether we have restrained our appetites and passions, and reduced them within the bounds of reason and religion ; or whether we have given ourselves up to pleasure, gain, or ambition, and formed such attachments to this world as fit us for nothing else, and leave us no hopes either of *gaining* or of *enjoying* a better ? It will be happy for us if, on all these heads of inquiry, we can answer without dismay. Worldly distinctions, we know, will then be of no avail : the proudest of them will be then confounded. *Naked came we into the world, and naked must we return.* We can carry nothing beyond the grave, but our virtues and our vices.

I shall conclude what hath been said on the last judgment with a collection of passages on this head from Scripture, where only our ideas of it can be obtained. And though most of these passages are figurative, yet, as figures are intended to illustrate realities, and are indeed the *only* illustrations of which this subject is capable, we may take it for granted that these figurative expressions

are intended to convey a just idea of what they represent. With a view to make the more impression upon you, I shall place these passages in a regular series, though collected from various parts.

*The Lord himself shall descend from heaven with his holy angels; the trumpet shall sound, and all that are in the grave shall bear his voice and come forth. — Then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory, and all nations shall be gathered before him; the books shall be opened, and men shall be judged according to their works. — They who have sinned without law shall perish (that is, be judged) without law, and they who have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law. — Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required. — Then shall he say to them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed, inherit the kingdom prepared for you: and to them on his left, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. — Then shall the righteous shine forth in the presence of their father, while the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment; there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. — What manner of persons ought we then to be in all holy conversation and godliness? looking for, and hastening unto, the day of our Lord; when the heavens, being on fire, shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat. — Wherefore, beloved,*

beloved, seeing that we look for such things, let us be diligent, that we may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless; that each of us may receive that blessed sentence, *Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a little, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.*

We believe farther in the *Holy Ghost*; that is, we believe every thing which the Scriptures tell us of the Holy Spirit of God. We inquire not into the nature of its union with the Godhead. We take it for granted, that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, have some kind of *union*, and some kind of *distinction*; because both this union, and this distinction, are plainly pointed out in Scripture; but *how* they exist we inquire not; concluding here, as in other points of difficulty, that if a clearer information had been necessary, it would have been afforded.

With regard to the operations of the Holy Spirit of God, (besides which, little more on this head is revealed,) we believe, that it directed the apostles, and enabled them to propagate the Gospel; and that it will assist all good men in the conscientious discharge of a pious life.

The scripture-doctrine, with regard to the assistance we receive from the Holy Spirit of God, (which is the most essential part of this article,) is briefly this: Our own endeavours, though absolutely

solutely necessary, are insufficient. We are *unprofitable servants* after all, and cannot please God unless sanctified and assisted by his Holy Spirit. Hence the life of a good man hath been sometimes called a standing miracle, something beyond the common course of nature. To attain any degree of goodness we must be supernaturally assisted.

At the same time we are assured of this assistance, if we strive to obtain it by fervent prayer, and attending to all the good motives which it inspires. If we trust in ourselves we shall fail: if we trust in God, without doing what we can ourselves, we shall fail likewise: and if we continue obstinate in our perverseness, we may at length by the prevalence of our bad habits almost totally incapacitate ourselves from being the temples of the Holy Ghost.

And indeed what is there in all this which common life does not daily illustrate? Is any thing more common than for the intellect of one man to assist that of another? Is not the whole scheme of education an infusion of knowledge and virtue, not our own? Is it not evident too, that nothing of this kind can be communicated without application on the part of the learner? Are not the efforts of the teacher in a manner necessarily proportioned to this application? If the learner become languid in his pursuits, are not the

the endeavours of the teacher of course disengaged? And will they not at length fail, if it be found in the end they answer no purpose? In a manner analogous to this, the Holy Spirit of God co-operates with the endeavours of man. Our endeavours are necessary to obtain God's assistance; and the more earnestly these endeavours are exerted, the measure of this grace will of course be greater. On the other hand, if these endeavours languish, the assistance of heaven will lessen in proportion; and if we behave with obstinate perverseness, we shall leave ourselves a melancholy prey to our own vicious inclinations.

As to the *manner* in which this spiritual assistance is conveyed, we make no inquiry. We can as little comprehend it, as we can the action of our souls upon our bodies. We are sensible that our souls do act upon our bodies; and it is a belief equally consonant to reason, that the divine influence may act upon our souls.

The advocate for natural religion need not be reminded, that among the heathens a divine influence was a received opinion. The priests of every oracle were supposed to be inspired by their gods; and the heroes of antiquity were universally believed to act under the influence of supernatural assistance; by which it was conceived they

performed actions beyond human power\*. This shews at least there is nothing in this doctrine repugnant to reason.

\* Non hæc humanis opibus, non arte magistra :  
Major agit Deus, atque opera ad majora remittit.

*AEn. xii. 427.*

**Nunquam vir magnus, sine divino afflato.** Cic.

**Non comptæ mansere comæ, sed peccus anhelum  
Et rabie fera corda tument ; majorque videri,  
Nec mortale sonans, afflata est numine quando  
Jam propiore dei—**

*AEn. vi. 48.*

Nay, the great Christian doctrine, that the assistance of heaven was to be obtained by prayer, is not certainly contrary to the dictates of reason. Thus the priestess of Apollo cried out to *Aeneas*, who presented himself to beg the assistance of the god :

— **Cessas in vota precesque,  
Tros, ait, Aeneas ? cessas ? neque enim ante dehissent  
Attonitæ magna ora domus—**

Immediately on which,

— **Gelidus Teucris per dura cucurrit  
Offa tremor ; fuditque preces rex peccore ab imo.**

*AEn. vi. 51.*

## LECTURE VIII.

*Holy Catholic Church explained—communion of saints—forgiveness of sins—Scripture-doctrine of sin and guilt—satisfaction of Christ analogous to nature—sacrifice considered—first in the light of a type—secondly, as a deduction of human reason—useless inquiries into the manner of Christ's satisfaction—different kinds of sin—ignorance—negligence—surprise—habitual—presumptuous.*

*We believe, farther, in the holy Catholic Church, and the communion of saints.*

*I believe in the holy Catholic Church, is certainly a very obscure expression to a protestant; as it is very capable of a popish construction, implying our trust in the infallibility of the church; whereas we attribute infallibility to no church upon earth. The most obvious sense, therefore, in which it can be considered as a protestant article of belief, is this; we call no particular society of Christians a holy Catholic Church; but believe, that all true and sincere Christians, of whatever communion, or particular opinion, shall be the objects of God's mercy: the patriarchal covenant was confined to a few: the Jewish Church stood also on a very narrow*

narrow basis; but the Christian Church, we believe, is truly catholic. The gracious offers of the Gospel are made to all mankind; and God through Christ *will take out of every nation such as shall be saved.*

The *communion of saints*, is an expression equally obscure; and whatever might have been the original meaning of it, it certainly does not resolve itself into a very obvious one to us. If we say we mean by it, that good Christians living together on earth, should exercise all offices of charity among themselves, no one will contradict the article; but many perhaps may ask, Why is it made an *article of faith*? It relates not so much to *faith* as to *practice*, and the ten commandments might just as well be introduced as articles of our faith.

To this I can only suggest, that it may have a place among the articles of our creed, as a test of our enlarged ideas of Christianity, and as opposed to the narrow-mindedness of some Christians, who harbour very uncharitable opinions against all who are not of their own church, and scruple not to shew their opinions by uncharitable actions. The papists particularly deny salvation to any but those of their own communion; and have given too much reason to believe they have no objection to persecute those of other persuasions, where they have

have the power. In opposition to this, we profess our belief of the great Christian law of charity. We believe we ought to think charitably of good Christians of *all* denominations, and ought to practise a free and unrestrained communion of charitable offices towards them.

In this light the second part of the article depends upon the first. By the *holy Catholic Church*, we mean all sincere Christians, of whatever church, or peculiarity of opinion; and by *the communion of saints*, a kind and charitable behaviour towards them.

Though it is probable this was not the original meaning of the article, yet as the reformers of the liturgy did not think it proper to make an alteration, we are led to seek such a sense as appears most consistent with Scripture. We are assured, that *this article*, as well as the *descent into hell*, is not of the same antiquity as the rest of the creed\*.

We profess our belief farther in the *forgiveness of sins*. The Scripture-doctrine of sin, and of the guilt, which arises from it, is this :

Man was originally created in a state of innocence, yet liable to fall. Had he persevered in his

\* See Bingham's *Antiquities*, vol. iv. chap. 3.

obedience,

obedience, he might have enjoyed that happiness, which is the consequence of perfect virtue: but when this happy state was lost, his passions and appetites became disordered and prone to evil; he became subject to death, and forfeited all title to everlasting happiness. Since that time mankind have all been, more or less, involved in sin; and are all, therefore, in the Scripture language, *under the curse*; that is, in a state of unpardoned guilt.

In this mournful exigence, what was to be done? In a state of nature, it is true, we might be sorry for our sins. Nature too might dictate repentance; but sorrow and repentance, though they may put us on our guard for the future, can make no atonement for sins already committed. A resolution to run no more into debt may make us cautious; but can never discharge a debt already contracted\*.

\* Thus Mr. Soame Jenyns expresses the same thing: "The punishment of vice is a debt due to justice, which cannot be remitted without compensation. Repentance can be no compensation. It may change a wicked man's disposition, and prevent his offending for the future; but can lay no claim to pardon for what is past. If any one by profligacy and extravagance contracts a debt, repentance may make him wiser, and hinder him from running into farther distresses; but can never pay off his old bonds, for which he must be ever accountable, unless they are discharged by himself, or some other in his stead." *View of the Internal Evidence*, p. 112.

In this distress of nature, Jesus Christ came into the world. He threw a light upon the gloom that surrounded us. He shewed us, that in this world we were lost ; that the law of nature could not save us ; that the tenor of that law was perfect obedience, with which we could not comply ; but that God, through his mediation, offered us a method of regaining happiness ; that he came to make that atonement for us which we could not make for ourselves, and to redeem us from that guilt which would otherwise overwhelm us ; that faith and obedience were, on our parts, the conditions required in this gracious covenant ; and that God promised us, on his, the pardon of our sins, and everlasting life ; that we were first, therefore, to be made holy through the *Gospel* of Christ ; and then we might expect salvation through his *death* : *Us, who were dead in trespasses and sins, would be quicken.* *Christ would redeem us from the curse of the law.* *By grace we should be saved through faith, and not that of ourselves : it was the gift of God.* *Not of works, lest any man should boast.*

This doctrine is generally called the satisfaction, or the atonement of Christ, and has given more offence to the deist, than almost any part of the Christian scheme. " Could not God," he cries, " forgive us freely, and save us with-

“ out an expedient which sounds so harshly in  
 “ our ears ? The Son of God comes down upon  
 “ earth, and suffers death :—for what ? Why, to  
 “ take upon himself the sins of man ; and, in the  
 “ Scripture phrase, to nail them to his cross.”

This is surely unbecoming language. How can any one presume to assert, that we may be forgiven freely, unless he can perfectly scan, and thoroughly understand God’s whole scheme of moral government ? What do we know of the nature of unatoned sin ? or of the immutable laws of eternal justice ? Can the deist give us any account of these things ? Or can he reconcile sin and justice in so satisfactory a manner, even to human reason, as the Scripture does, in the account it gives us of the fall of man, and of his restoration through Christ ? Till he can, it will be modest in him not to cavil at God’s gracious means of rectifying the disorders of the world. Nothing is more easy than to cavil : nothing more difficult than to form a consistent plan in opposition to the truth.

But, to be a little more particular, how can the deist talk of the redemption of the world by Christ, as an expedient that sounds so harshly in our ears ? It is true, it is an astonishing event ; and, in all its greatness, wholly new and unparalleled ; but yet, when God has revealed it to us,

our

our reason totally closes with it. We are reconciled to it, by observing it analogous to God's whole scheme of *moral government*, and to the *use of sacrifices*, which everywhere prevailed in the world \*.

What is the whole state of infancy and youth, from one end to the other, but a continued scene of preventing evils, and of rescuing from them, at the expence of pains and care, and suffering in the master, the friend, the parent, or whoever acts the part of a kind mediator?—How many, again, after they are advanced in life, do we daily see brought into such circumstances, as without the friendly mediation of their fellow-creatures, would totally ruin them? Some, through the means of others, are relieved from painful disorders, under which they might have languished to the end of life. Others again, through their follies and excesses, have brought their affairs into such disorder as could never be redeemed, unless their friends, by an expensive mediation, should interfere. These instances, and many others, that might be drawn from the circle and commerce of human life, and many, in which innocence suffers for guilt, shew at least, that the sufferings of Christ for mankind, and the redemption of the world

\* For a more detailed account of this matter, the reader is referred to the fifth chapter of Butler's *Analogy*.

through

through those sufferings, are analogous to that *stated order* of things, and *ordinary course* of moral government, which God hath established in the world.

The deist may be farther asked, What he thinks of the origin of sacrifices? A sacrifice is a rite so *apparently absurd*, that we can hardly imagine any one could prescribe it to himself; and yet we know, that all nations, (I think, we may say, *all* nations,) however remote and unconnected with each other, joined in it with one consent. Let us press the deist a little on this head. Whence is it, does he think, that all the world has joined in so strange a rite, as that of putting an innocent creature to death, to appease the anger of an incensed God\*? Can he give any rational account of its origin

\* It would be endless to quote passages from heathen writers. I shall just mention a few which first occur: When Horatius killed his sister, Livy tells us, he was pardoned, "qui busdam piacularibus sacrificiis factis," lib. i.

Dido proposing to appease Jupiter, orders one of her attendants,  
— pecudes secum, & monstrata piacula ducat.

AEn. iv. 636.

The idea of an atonement is thus strongly expressed by Virgil:  
Unum pro multis dabitur caput—

AEn. v. 815.

But

origin and institution?—Or is he constrained to allow with us, that the only rational account of this matter is, that the use of sacrifice was instituted by God himself, and enjoined to our first parents immediately on the fall, and so continued as a type of that great sacrifice, which was afterwards to be offered for the sins of mankind?—A type, we know, is intended as an introduction to something typified: and men through all ages, from father to son, have acquiesced in a practice, without knowing whence they had it, that they might silently fulfil, though without intending it, the secret purposes of heaven; which meant by this rite to introduce gradually the idea of that great sacrifice which was to be made for the sins of the world; and which, however late, it became visible, was slain in effect *from the foundation of the world*, and began unquestionably to operate for the good of man from the instant of the fall. Sacrifices might perhaps then be what the Lord's supper now is, a sort of partaking of the body and blood of Christ: and what is still

---

But still stronger is a passage in Cæsar, where, speaking of the human sacrifices of the Germans, he says, “*Pro vita hominis nisi vita hominis reddatur, non posse aliter deorum immortalium numen placari arbitrantur. Publicaque ejusdem generis habent instituta sacrificia.*” Cæsar's Com. lib. vi.

more remarkable, the type became universally abolished wherever it became fulfilled.

Does the unbeliever acquiesce in this account of the origin of sacrifice? Or, will he rather resolve it into some general deduction of *human reason*, and attribute it to the mere invention of man? Be it so. On this ground let us follow him: and on this ground he must at least allow, that the use of sacrifice proves all mankind to have had *from nature* an idea, that they stood in need of *other* merits besides *their own*, to redeem them from sin; that the light of *reason* pointed the necessity of *some atonement* to make up their deficiencies; and that offering *the life of an innocent creature* for their transgressions, came the nearest of any thing they could conceive, to the idea of *such an atonement*.

Thus this great article of our faith, though so offensive to many of the advocates for reason, appears both similar to God's moral government, and agreeable to the general sense of mankind. God is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever; and a connection, a uniformity, and analogy run through all his works, if it were in our power to trace them with precision.

If the unbeliever still inquire farther, and cannot acquiesce without a plain account of the *manner* in which the death of Christ satisfies God for

the sins of the world, we must here be constrained to leave him. In such inquiries he will rarely meet with satisfaction. But let him be consistent. Let him be a universal sceptic. Let him doubt a future state. Let him doubt the immortality of his soul. Let him doubt even his own existence: for which of these things can he *explain*?

If we think justly, we should distinguish between what is, and what is not, capable of proof. Let us try the truth of Scripture by every method that human reason can invent: but let us not imagine that human reason can comprehend the whole system of the Christian religion. We enter freely into a rational proof of the being of a God: but we do not presume to comprehend his attributes. What *relates to man* in the scheme of our redemption is very clear. 'God's part' indeed is beyond our comprehension. But with this we have little to do. What is it to us, in what manner God performs this gracious work? Our concern lies nearer home. God has offered us the pardon of our sins, and everlasting life, through the merits of Christ. But if, in the niceness of our casuistry, we reject this offer, we *may* have reason to repent; if we reject it through *negligence*, we certainly *shall*.

That we may have a more complete view of the danger of sin, (the cause of our misery and of our Saviour's death,) I shall conclude this article with enumerating its several kinds.

And first I shall mention the lightest in this catalogue, sins of *ignorance*. A man may commit a sin without knowing it. He may have his doubts at the time of acting, without the means of solving them. His ignorance does not alter the nature of the action, though it may mitigate the guilt. Such sins, indeed, one should hope, are small offences in the eyes of a merciful God:—and yet St. Paul heavily bewails his having persecuted the church of Christ, notwithstanding he did it *ignorantly*. But St. Paul had few sins to repent of but those of ignorance.

Sins of *negligence* are more involved in guilt. Not to use the opportunities we have, argues great coolness in religion, and great inattention to our duty.—And on this head we should be much on our guard: for many sins, which may perhaps on too slight an examination, appear to be those of *ignorance* only, may in fact be charged upon our own *negligence*, and want of attention to those means of knowing better which God hath afforded us.

Next to these we may rank sins of *surprise*; into which we are commonly betrayed by some sudden

sudden temptation. Sins of this kind should be manfully withstood, and sincerely repented. If through our indulgence we suffer them to get ground upon us, they are no longer sins of *surprise*: they change their name, and must be classed under the head of *habitual sins*.

*Habitual sins* are stained with a very high degree of guilt. When we thus become the slaves of vice, our minds are tainted, and the sense of religion is lost. Even smaller sins, when their fibres are thus woven into our nature, attain enormous growth. Of this also we may be assured, that when we have thus lost the command of ourselves, we may proceed any length. If a proper temptation arise, what is there to check us? — We may be carried to the last degree of wickedness; to which the Scriptures give the name of *presumptuous sins*.

By *presumptuous sins*, are meant those black crimes which have no want of knowledge to excuse, no sudden temptation to extenuate; but are acted with deliberate contrivance, in open defiance of law, conscience, and religion; and attended with all those horrid circumstances which shew the last depravity of human nature.

## LECTURE IX.

*Immortality of the soul—agreeable to reason—resurrection of the body—Scripture doctrine on this head—application of it—future state of happiness—how described in Scripture—future state of misery—the eternity of it a doctrine of reason—Scripture account of it—application of the doctrine.*

**W**E believe farther in the resurrection of the body. — This article presumes our belief in the immortality of the soul.

What that principle of life is, which we call the soul; how it is distinguished from mere animal life; how it is connected with the body; and in what state it subsists when all bodily functions cease; are among those indissoluble questions with which nature everywhere abounds. But notwithstanding the difficulties which attend the discussion of this great question on the immortality of the soul, the truth itself hath in all ages of the world been the popular creed. Men believed their souls were immortal from their own feelings, from observing the progressive state of the soul, capable even after the body had attained its full strength, of still higher improvements both in

in knowledge and in habits of virtue; from the analogy of all nature, dying and reviving in every part; from their situation here so apparently incomplete in itself; and from a variety of other topics, which the reason of man was able to suggest. But though nature could obscurely suggest this great truth, Christianity alone threw a clear light upon it, and impressed it with a full degree of conviction upon our minds.

But the article before us proceeds a step farther. It not only implies the *immortality of the soul*; but asserts the *resurrection of the body*. Nor was *this* doctrine wholly new. In the heathen conceptions of a future life, we always find the soul in an imbodyed state. The body was burned, or it was buried: yet still we find it collected again into an organized form: airy, indeed, and bloodless; but with all the parts of a human body, and able to perform its operations. — There is nothing then in this doctrine that need shock our reason; because it seems to be the result of reason itself. — Besides, as we believe, that God originally created our bodies from the dust, is it more strange, that he should raise us from the dust again? Or, is it more strange, when we seriously weigh the matter, that a human body should be laid into the ground where it crumbles into dust, and is afterwards restored to new life; than that

a grain of corn, under the same circumstances, should vegetate? Are we at all acquainted with either process? Or dare we presume to say, that, in the hands of an Almighty God, one is more improbable than the other? The only difference is, that corn is produced every year; while the great harvest of mankind (if I may so speak) rests till the consummation of all things.—That the fact therefore is so, depends both on analogy, and the best interpretation of Scripture. But beyond *mere fact* the Scripture is silent. In what manner the body shall be raised, or of what substance, we pretend not to examine. We learn *that it is sown in corruption, and raised in incorruption; that it is sown in dishonour, and raised in glory; that it is sown a natural body, and raised a spiritual body*: from all which we gather, that whatever sameness our bodies may have, they will hereafter take a more spiritualized nature, and will not be subject to those infirmities to which they were subject on earth.—Farther on this head it behoves us not to inquire.

Instead, therefore, of entering into metaphysical disquisitions of identity, or any other curious points in which this deep subject might engage us, (all which, as they are founded on uncertainty, must end in conjecture,) it is better to draw this doctrine into practical use. Let it teach us to

pay that regard to our bodies which is due to them; not vainly to adorn; not luxuriously to pamper them; but to keep them as much as possible from the pollutions of the world, and lay them down in the grave undefiled, there to be sealed up in expectation of a blessed resurrection.

Lastly, we believe *in the life everlasting*; in which article we express our faith in the eternity of a future state of rewards and punishments.

This article is nearly related to the last, and is involved in the same obscurity. In what the reward of the virtuous will consist after death, our reason gives us no information. Conjecture indeed it will, in a matter which so nearly concerns us; and it hath conjectured in all ages: but information it hath none, except from the word of God; and even there our limited capacities can receive it only in general and figurative expressions. We are told, *there will then reign fulness of joy and pleasures for evermore; that the righteous shall have an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, that faileth not away; where they shall shine forth as the sun, in the presence of their father; where error and sin and misery shall be no more; where shall be assembled an innumerable company of angels, the general assembly of the church, the spirits of just men made perfect; that they shall neither hunger nor thirst any*

*more; that all tears shall be wiped from their eyes; that there shall be neither death, nor sorrow, nor pain.*

From these, and, such expressions, as these, though we cannot collect the entire nature of a future state of happiness, yet we easily gather a few circumstances which must of course attend it; as, that it will be very great: that it will last for ever: that it will be of a nature entirely different from the happiness of this world: that as in this world our passions and appetites prevail; in the next reason and virtue will have the superiority: *bunger and thirst, tears and sorrow, we read, will be no more;* that is, all uneasy passions and appetites will then be annihilated; all vain fears will be then removed; all anxious and intruding cares; and we shall feel ourselves complete and perfect; and our happiness, not dependent as here, on a thousand precarious circumstances, both within and without ourselves, but consistent, uniform, and stable.

On the other hand, we pretend not to inquire in what the punishment of the wicked consists. In the Scripture we find many expressions, from which we gather that it will be very great. It is there called *an everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels; where the worm dieth not, and the fire is never quenched; where shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth; where the wicked shall drink of the wrath of God, poured without mixture into the cup.*

cup of his indignation; where they shall have no rest, neither by day nor night.

Though it becomes us certainly to put our own interpretations with the greatest caution and humility on such passages as these; yet *the worm that never dieth, and the fire that is never quenched*, are strong expressions, and hardly to be evaded by any refinements of verbal criticism. Let the deist bravely argue down his fears, by demonstrating the absurdity of a spirit's suffering in material fire. Let him fully explain the nature of future punishment; and convince us, that where it cannot reform, it must be unjust. — But let us, with more modesty, lay our hands humbly on our breasts, confess our ignorance; revere the appointments of God, whatever they may be; and prepare to meet them with holy hope, and trembling joy, and awful submission to his righteous will.

To the unenlightened heathen, however, the eternity of future punishments appeared no such unreasonable doctrine. Their state of the damned was of eternal duration. A vulture for ever tore those entrails which were for ever renewed; and unhappy Theseus bore his punishment to all eternity\*.

\* — Restoque immanis vultur oburco  
Immortale jecur tundens, secundaque poenis  
Viscera —

— Sedet, aeternumque sedebit,  
In felix Theseus —

*En. vi.*

Of

Of one thing, however, we are well assured, (which may set us entirely at rest in all our inquiries on this deep subject,) that every thing will, in the end, be right ; that a just and merciful God must act agreeably to justice and mercy ; and that the first of these attributes will most assuredly be tempered with the latter.

From the doctrine of future rewards and punishments, the great practical truth which arises is, that we cannot exert too much pains in qualifying ourselves for the happiness of a future world. As this happiness will last for ever, how beneficial will be the exchange ; this world, *which is but for a moment*, for that *weight of glory which fadeth not away*.

Sin, on the other hand, receives the greatest discouragement from this doctrine, as every degree of wickedness, short and transitory as it is, which we commit in this world, may be considered as an addition to an everlasting account in the world to come.

## LECTURE X

*The ten commandments—not a complete rule of duty—division of them, and short commentary on them—our duty to God—belief—fear—love—objections to the goodness of God answered—measures of the love of God.*

HAVING considered the articles of our faith, we proceed to the rules of our practice. These, we know, are of such importance, that let our faith be what it will, unless it influence our lives, it is of no value. At the same time, if it be what it ought to be, it will certainly have this influence.

On this head, the ten commandments are first placed before us; from which the composers of the catechism, as well as many other divines, have drawn a complete system of Christian duties. But this is perhaps rather too much\*. Both Moses

in

\* In the fourth volume of Bishop Warburton's Commentary on Pope's works, in the second satyr of Dr. Donne, are these lines:

" Of whose strange crimes no canonist can tell

" In which commandment's large contents they dwell."

The original, says the bishop, is more humorous:

In which commandment's large receipt they dwell;

25

in the law, and Christ in the gospel, seem to have enlarged greatly on morals; and each of them, especially the latter, to have added many practical rules, which do not obviously fall under any of the commandments.

But though we cannot call the decalogue a complete rule of duty, we accept it with the utmost reverence, as the first great written law which God communicated to man. We consider it as an eternal monument, inscribed by the finger of God himself, with a few strong, indelible characters; not defining the minutiae of morals, but enjoining those great duties which have the most particular influence on the happiness of society, and prohibiting those enormous crimes which are the greatest sources of its distress.

The ten commandments are divided into two parts, from their having been originally written on two tables. Hence one table is supposed to contain our duty to God; the other, our duty to man. But this seems to be an unauthorized

---

as if the ten commandments were so wide as to stand ready to receive every thing which either the law of Nature or the Gospel commands. A just ridicule on those practical commentators, as they are called, who include all moral and religious duties within them.

division;

division; tending to a supposition, that some duties are owing to God, and others to man: whereas, in fact, we know that all duties are equally owing to God. However, if we avoid this misconception, the division into our duty to God, and our duty to man, may be a convenient one.— The four first commandments are contained in the first table; the remaining six in the second.

When the ten commandments were given, the world was over-run with *polytheism* and *idolatry*. Against these crimes the two first commandments were directed.

In the second, it is said, *God will visit the sins of the fathers upon the children unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate him.* As the Jewish law was chiefly enforced by temporal rewards and punishments, we understand the commandment in this light. The temporal misery which parents entailed on their posterity by their sins, particularly by their idolatry, was held out to the Israelites in the commandment, to insure their obedience on the principle of parental as well as self-love. In their captivities this threat was executed, and afterwards more severely in the destruction of Jerusalem; in all which calamities, no doubt, (as it could not be otherwise,) the sins of the fathers were visited on their posterity.

tity.—But when some of the Jews conceived this threat to extend to a future world, the prophet Ezekiel, in the 18th chapter, sets them perfectly at rest on that head.

The third enjoins reverence to God's name. As a solemn oath is the strictest obligation among men, nothing can be of greater service to society than to hold it in general respect.

The fourth commands the observance of the sabbath; as one of the best means of preserving a sense of God, and of religion in the minds of men.

The second table begins with enjoining obedience to parents; a duty in a peculiar manner adapted to the Jewish state before any regular government was erected. The *temporal* promise which guards it, and which can relate only to the Jews, may either mean the promise of long life to *each individual* who observed the precept, or of stability to the *whole nation* on the general observance of it, which is, perhaps, a better interpretation.

The five next commandments are prohibitions of the most capital crimes which pollute the heart of man, and injure the peace of society.

The first of them forbids murder, which is the greatest injury that one man can do another: the damage is irreparable.

The

The seventh commandment forbids adultery. The black infidelity and injury which accompany this crime; the confusion in families which often succeeds; and the general tendency it hath to destroy the domestic happiness of society, stain it with a very high degree of guilt.

The security of our property is the object of the eighth commandment.

The security of our characters, of the ninth.

The tenth restrains us not only from the actual commission of sin; but from those bad inclinations which give it birth.

After the commandments follows a commentary upon them, intituled "Our duty to God," and "Our duty to our neighbour;" the latter of which might more properly be intituled, "Our duty to our neighbour and ourselves."—These seem intended as an explanation of the commandments on Christian principles; with the addition of other duties, which do not properly fall under any of them. On these we shall be more large.

The first part of our duty to God, is to believe in him; which is the foundation of all religion, and therefore offers itself first to our consideration.

tion. But this great point hath been already considered \*.

The next branch of our duty to God, is to *fear him*. The fear of God is impressed equally on the *righteous man* and the *sinner*. But the fear of the sinner consists only in the dread of punishment. It is the necessary consequence of guilt, and is not *that fear* which we consider as a *duty*. The fear of God here meant consists in that reverential awe, that constant apprehension of his presence, which secures us from offending him.—When we are before our superiors, we naturally feel a respect which prevents our doing any thing indecent in their sight. Such (only in a higher degree) should be our reverence of God, in whose sight, we know, we always stand. If a sense of the divine presence hath such an influence over us as to check the bad tendency of our thoughts, words, and actions, we may properly be said to be impressed with the *fear of God*. — If not, we neglect one of the best means of checking sin which the whole circle of religious restraint affords. We neglect also one of the noblest principles that can enter the human heart; for where

already  
to fear  
fully on  
fear of  
ment.  
is not  
e fear  
rential  
sence,  
en we  
a re-  
indep-  
er de-  
whose  
nse of  
ver us  
ughts;  
aid to  
t, we  
g sin  
nt af-  
prin-  
where-  
the

the fear of God is truly fixed, it excludes every other fear.

Some people go a step farther, and say, that as every degree of light behaviour, though short of an indecency, is improper before our superiors, so is it likewise in the presence of Almighty God, who is so much superior to every thing that can be called great on earth.

But this is the language of superstition. Mirth, within the bounds of innocence, cannot be offensive to God. He is offended only with sin. Sin in the lowest degree is hateful to him; but a formal, set behaviour, can be necessary only to preserve human distinctions.

The next duty to God is that of *love*, which is founded on his goodness to his creatures. Even this world, mixed as it is with evil, abounds with marks of the goodness of the Deity. Most men, indeed, place their affections too much upon it, and rate it at too high a value; which shews, at least, how valuable it is generally esteemed: but, in the opinion even of wise men, it deserves some estimation. The acquisition of knowledge in all its branches; the intercourse of society; the contemplation of the wonderful works of God, and all the beauteous scenes of Nature; nay, even the low inclina-

inclinations of animal life, when indulged under the restraints of religion, furnish various modes of enjoyment.

Let this world, however, go for little ; its value chiefly consists in its connection with the next. In contemplating a future life, the enjoyments of this are lost. It is in the contemplation of futurity, that the Christian views the goodness of God in the fullest light. When we see the Deity engaging himself by covenant to make our short abode here a preparation for our eternal happiness hereafter ; when we are assured that this happiness is not only eternal, but of the purest and most perfect kind ; when we see God as a father, opening all his stores of love and kindness to bring back to himself a race of creatures fallen from their original perfection, and lost through their own folly, perverseness, and wickedness ; then it is that the evils of life seem as atoms in the sun-beam : the divine nature appears overflowing with goodness to mankind, and calls forth every exertion of our gratitude and love.

That the enjoyments of a *future* state, in whatever those enjoyments consist, are the gift of God, is sufficiently obvious : but with regard to the government of *this* world, there is often among men a sort of infidelity which ascribes all events to their own prudence and industry. Things appear to

run

run in a stated course; and the finger of God, which acts unseen, is rarely supposed.

And, no doubt, our own industry and prudence have a great share in procuring for us the blessings of life. God hath annexed them as the reward of our exertions. But can we suppose that such exertions could be of any service to us, unless the providence of God should throw opportunities in our way? All the means of worldly happiness are, surely, no other than the means of his government. Moses saw among the Jews a kind of infidelity like this, when he forbad the people to say in their hearts—*My power, and the might of my hands hath gotten me this wealth*: whereas, he adds, they ought to remember, *That it is the Lord who giveth power to get wealth*.

Others again have objected to the goodness of God, his permission of evil. A good God, say they, would have prevented it, and have placed his creatures in a situation beyond the distresses of life.

With regard to *man*, there seems to be no great difficulty in this matter. It is enough, surely, that God hath put the means of comfort in our power. In the natural world, he hath given us remedies against hunger, cold, and disease; and in the moral world, against the mischief of sin. Even death itself, the last great evil, he hath shewn us

how

how to change into the most consummate blessing. A state of trial \* therefore, and a future world, easily set things right on this head.

The misery of the *brute* creation is, indeed, more unaccountable; and the cruelty over it, which is exercised by man. But have we not the modesty to suppose that this difficulty may be owing to our *ignorance*? On the strength of what we know of the wisdom of God, we may, surely, trust him for those things which we *cannot* comprehend?—Besides, difficulties in the moral government of the world (as in nature, in religion, in the Scriptures, and in every thing else) may be left on purpose to exercise our faith. There are things, we are told, which *angels desire to look into*, and which they probably do not understand. Does man suppose himself equal to all?

One truth is very apparent; that if we should argue ourselves into atheism by the untractableness of these subjects, we should be so far from getting rid of our difficulties, that, if we reason justly, ten thousand greater would arise, either from considering the world as under no ruler, or under one of our own imagining.

There remains one farther consideration with regard to the love of God, and that is, the mea-

\* See page 23.

sure of it. We are told we ought to love him, *with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our strength.* These are strong expressions, and seem to imply a greater warmth of affection than many people may perhaps find they can exert. The affections of some are naturally cool, and little excited by any objects. The guilty person is he whose affections are warm in every thing but religion.—The obvious meaning therefore of the expression is, that, whether our affections are cool or warm, we should make God our *chief good*; we should set our affections more on him than on any thing else; we should obey his laws, instead of listening to the temptations of the world; and for his sake, and for the sake of his laws, we should be ready to resign every thing we have, even life itself. He who can do this may be said to love God *with all his heart, and all his soul, and all his strength.*

After all, however, every person has it greatly in his power to strengthen his affections by contemplating the object of them; and as far as he is remiss in this point, so far he is deficient in his duty.

## LECTURE XI.

*Observance of the sabbath—Jewish sabbath—difference between it and the Christian sabbath—moral ends of the sabbath—public worship—on what reason it is founded—sabbath of a mean instruction—trust in God—honour due to God's name—objections against the use of oaths answered—perjury—cursing—common swearing.*

**O**UR next duty to God is to worship him, to give him thanks, to put our whole trust in him, and to call upon him.

We have here the duty of prayer recommended to us: but I shall have occasion, in treating of the Lord's prayer, to speak more fully hereafter on this subject. What I shall say at present shall be confined to the observance of the sabbath.

The Jewish sabbath was instituted to commemorate the creation of the world, and the redemption from Egypt. These great events which it held out, impressed on the people a strong sense of God's power, their dependance upon him, and the propriety of worship.

The great event held out by the Christian sabbath is the resurrection of Christ. To commemorate

morate this, the Christian hath changed his sabbath from the seventh day of the week to the first: and in the observance of it, retains its moral ends, *public worship and instruction*.

On the head of *public worship* much might be said. — It is a testimony of that *reverence* which is due to the Supreme Being. The general sense of mankind considers it as such. The heathen nations always approached their gods in public assemblies. The respect of a public resort, on solemn occasions, is paid even to earthly princes. If it tends therefore in any degree to impress an idea of reverence, it is certainly due on all occasions where the Almighty is concerned.

An attendance also on the public service of the church is giving a *public testimony of our faith*. It is that test which society demands of all its members. By the laws of the community it is exacted; and it tends undoubtedly to create a confidence among men.

These public assemblies are also a kind of *connecting bond* among Christians. Every part of the service points out that love and union which should subsist among them. It places them in the light of children of one common parent, joining with one consent, in begging blessings, which concern them all. — Bringing all ranks likewise together impresses naturally ideas of benevolence and humility.

Public

Public worship also is particularly accommodated to deprecate *national calamities* and implore *national blessings*; as closet devotion is more the vehicle of our *private requests*. It is commonly also esteemed the most animated species of devotion, as the zeal of one may be supposed to excite the zeal of another. In the generality indeed of our cold, inanimated assemblies, little of this is seen: but if we were present at an assembly, where every member was really in earnest, we must be much unacquainted with the spirit of devotion, if we did not, in some degree, catch the flame.

We must also particularly remember, that great stress is laid upon this species of devotion in *Scripture*; where we read frequently of assemblies meeting to praise God *on the first day of the week*.

Secondly, the sabbath is the great mean of *instruction*. It is probable, that people of *superior stations* and *education*, are not always so well instructed in *religion*, as not to hear with advantage their duty enforced; or set in a light that may strike them; or at least to be occasionally reminded of it. But whatever they may think with regard to themselves, they must allow, that to the greater part of mankind, religious instruction is *absolutely necessary*. It is the opinion of the generality of judicious people, that if it were not for

for the *sabbath*, *religion* itself would be lost. It is equally certain, that if people of superior stations do not give the observance of it *their* sanction, it will not long have credit among the *vulgar*. Such people therefore as neglect it, have much to answer for, merely in the light of *citizens*.

But if they carry their *neglect* of the *sabbath* into *contempt*, by treating it as an ordinary day, spending it in card-playing, and licentious amusements, under whatever apology they may screen their own practice, they certainly loosen the ties of *religion* in a country where such practices have always been looked on with abhorrence. They act the part of very pernicious members of society, and for the sake only of a mere amusement.

But our *prayers*, whether in public, or in private, are only an idle parade, unless we *put our trust in God*.

By putting *our trust in God*, is meant depending on him as our *happiness* and our *refuge*. — Human nature is always endeavouring either to remove pain; or, if ease be obtained, to acquire happiness. And those things are certainly the most eligible, which in these respects are the most effectual. The world, it is true, makes us flattering promises: but does it keep them? We

confist of two parts, a body and a soul. Both of these want the means of happiness, as well as the removal of evil. But the world cannot even afford them to the *body*. Its means of happiness to those who *depend upon them as such*, are, in a thousand instances, unsatisfying. Even, at best, they will fail us in the *end*; while pain, diseases, and death, shew us that the world can afford no *refuge* against bodily distress. And if it cannot afford the means of happiness, and of security to the *body*, how much less can we suppose it able to afford them to the *soul*?

Nothing then, *in this world*, is a sufficient foundation for *trust*: nor indeed can any thing be but Almighty God, who affords us the *only means* of happiness, and is our *only real refuge* in distress. On him, the more we trust, the greater we shall feel our security; and that man who has, on just religious motives, confirmed in himself this trust, wants nothing else to secure his happiness. The world may wear what aspect it will: it is not on it that he depends. As far as prudence goes, he endeavours to avoid the evils of life: but when they fall to his share, (as sooner or later we must all share them,) he resigns himself into the hands of that God who made him, and who knows best how to dispose of him. On him he thoroughly depends, and with him he has a constant intercourse

course by prayer ; trusting, that whatever happens is agreeable to that just government which God has established ; and that, of consequence, it must be best.

We are enjoined next to honour God's holy name. The name of God is accompanied with such ideas of greatness and reverence, that it should never pass our lips without suggesting those ideas. Indeed, it should never be mentioned, but with a kind of awful hesitation, and on the most solemn occasions, either in serious discourse, or when we invoke God in prayer, or when we swear by his name.

In this last light we are here particularly enjoined to honour the name of God. A solemn oath is an appeal to God himself \* ; and is entitled to our utmost respect, were it only in a political light ; as in all human concerns it is the strongest test of veracity ; and has been approved as such by the wisdom of all nations.

Some religionists have disapproved the use of oaths, under the idea of profaneness. The language of the sacred writers conveys a different

\* The poet's rule in the drama, is exactly what ought to be the Christian's in the use of oaths :

Nec Deus interit, nisi dignus vindice nodus  
Inciderit.

idea. One of them says, *An oath for confirmation is an end of all strife*: another, *I take God for record upon my soul*: and a third, *God is my witness*.

To the use of oaths others have objected, that they are nugatory. The good man will speak the truth without an oath; and the bad man cannot be held by one. And this would be true if mankind were divided into *good* and *bad*: but as they are generally of a mixed character, we may well suppose, that many would venture a *simple falsehood*; who would yet be startled at the idea of perjury\*.

As an oath therefore taken in a solemn manner, and on a proper occasion, may be considered as one of the highest acts of religion; so perjury, or false-swear<sup>ing</sup>, is certainly one of the highest acts of impiety; and the greatest dishonour we can possibly shew to the name of God. It is, in effect, either denying our belief in a God, or his power to punish. Other crimes wish to escape the notice of Heaven: this is daring the Almighty to his face.

After *perjury*, the name of God is most dishonoured by the horrid practice of common swearing; in which we include *curse<sup>ing</sup>*. If this

<sup>and</sup> \* They who attend our courts of justice, often see instances among the common people of their asserting roundly what they will either refuse to swear; or when sworn, will not assert.

shocking vice were not so dreadfully familiar to our ears, it could not fail to strike us with the utmost horror.

A sin so universally practised, one should imagine attended with some great advantage, in the way either of pleasure or profit. The wages of iniquity commonly afford some temptation; but to commit sin without any wages, is a strange species of infatuation. — May we then ask the common swearer, what the advantages are which arise from this practice?

It will be difficult to point out one. — Perhaps it may be said, that it adds strength to an affirmation. But if a man commonly strengthen his affirmations in this way, we may venture to assert, that the practice will tend rather to lessen than confirm his credit. It shews plainly what he himself thinks of his own veracity. We never prop a building till it become ruinous.

Some forward youth may think, that an oath adds an air and spirit to his discourse; that it is manly and important; and gives him consequence. We may whisper one secret in his ear, which he may be assured *is a truth*. These airs of manliness give him consequence with those only *whose commendation is disgrace*; others he only convinces at how early an age he wishes to be thought profligate.

Perhaps he may imagine, that an oath gives force and terror to his threatenings. In this he may be right; and the more horribly wicked he grows, the greater object of terror he may make himself. On this plan the devil affords him a complete pattern for imitation.

Paltry as these apologies are, I should suppose, the practice of common swearing has little more to say. — Those, however, who can *argue* in favour of this sin, I should fear, there is little chance to *reclaim*. But it is probable, that the greater part of such as are addicted to it, act rather from *habit* than *principle*. To deter such persons from indulging so pernicious a habit, and to shew them that it is worth their while to be at some pains to conquer it, let us now see what arguments may be produced on the other side.

In the first place, common swearing leads to perjury. He who is addicted to swear on every trifling occasion, cannot but *often*, I had almost said *unavoidably*, give the sanction of an oath to an untruth: and though I should hope such perjury is not a sin of so heinous a nature as what in judicial matters is called *wilful and corrupt*, yet it is certainly stained with a *very great degree of guilt*.

But, secondly, common swearing is a large stride towards *wilful and corrupt* perjury; in as much

much as it makes a solemn oath to be received with less reverence. If nobody dared to take an oath but on proper occasions an oath would be received with respect; but when we are accustomed to hear swearing the common language of our streets, it is no wonder that people make light of oaths on *every* occasion, and that *judicial*, *commercial*, *qualifying*, and *official* oaths, are all treated with so much *indifference*.

Thirdly, common swearing may be considered as an act of *great irreverence to God*, and as such, implying also a *great indifference to religion*. If it would disgrace a chief magistrate to suffer appeals on every trifling or ludicrous occasion; we may at least think it as disrespectful to the Almighty. If we lose our reverence for *God*, it is impossible we can retain it for *his laws*. You scarcely remember a common swearer, who was in other respects an exact Christian.

But above all, we should be deterred from common swearing by the positive command of our Saviour, which is founded unquestionably on the wickedness of the practice: *You have heard, saith Christ, that it hath been said by them of old time, thou shalt not forswear thyself: but I say unto you, swear not at all; neither by heaven, for it is God's throne, neither by the earth, for it is his footstool: but let your communication (that is, your ordinary*

conversation) be yea, yea, nay, nay; for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.—St. James also, with great emphasis pressing his Master's words, says, *Above all things, my brethren, swear not; neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath; but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay, lest you fall into condemnation.*

I shall just add, on this subject, that two things are to be avoided, which are nearly allied to swearing.—In the first place, the use of *light exclamations*, and *invocations upon God* on every trivial occasion, is certainly wrong. We cannot have much reverence for *God himself*, when we treat his *name* in so *familiar* a manner; and may assure ourselves, that we are indulging a practice which must weaken impressions that ought to be preserved as strong as possible.

Secondly, such *idle expressions*, and *wanton phrases* as sound like swearing, are to be avoided; and are often therefore indulged by silly people for the sake of the sound, who think (if they think at all) that they add to their discourse the *spirit* of swearing without the *guilt* of it. Such people had better lay aside, together with swearing, every appearance of it. These appearances may both *offend* and *mislead others*; and, with regard to *themselves*, may end in *realities*. At least, they shew an *inclination* to swearing; and an inclination to vice indulged, is really vice.

## LECTURE XII.

*Honour due to God's word—books of Scripture—patriarchal history—Jewish history—prophetic writings—poetical and moral—new Testament—history of Christ, and the early age of the church—epistles and revelations—use and application of Scripture—what it is to serve God truly—what it is to serve him all the days of our life.*

As we are enjoined to honour God's holy name, so are we enjoined also to honour his holy word.

By *God's holy word*, we mean both the Old Testament and the New. The connection between them is so close, that no man can pay a regard to the one without paying it also to the other. The New Testament is not only of the same texture with the old, but the very same web, as it were, only more unfolded.

The books of the Old Testament open with the earliest accounts of time, earlier than any human records reach; and yet, in many instances, they are strengthened by human records. The heathen mythology is often grounded on remnants of the sacred story; and many of the Bible-events are recorded, however imperfectly, in profane history.

The very face of nature bears witness to the deluge.

In the history of the patriarchs is exhibited a most beautiful picture of the simplicity of ancient manners, and of genuine nature, unadorned indeed by science, but impressed strongly with a sense of religion. This gives an air of greatness and dignity to all the sentiments and actions of these exalted characters.

The patriarchal history is followed by the Jewish. Here we have the principal events of that peculiar nation; which lived under a theocracy, and was set apart to *preserve* and *propagate*\* the knowledge of the true God through those ages of ignorance antecedent to Christ. Here too we find those types and representations, which the apostle to the Hebrews calls *the shadows of good things to come*.

To those books, which contain the legislation and history of the Jews, succeed the prophetic writings. As the time of the promise drew still nearer, the notices of its approach became stronger. The kingdom of the Messiah, which was but obscurely shadowed by the ceremonies of the Jewish law, was marked in stronger lines by the prophets, and proclaimed in more intelligible language. The *office* of the Messiah, his *ministry*, his *life*, his *actions*, his *death*, and his *resurrection*, are all very

\* See this subject very learnedly treated in one of the first chapters of Jenkins's *Reasonableness of Christianity*.

distinctly

distinctly held out. It is true, the Jews, explaining the warm figures of the prophetic language too literally, and applying to a temporal dominion those expressions which were intended only as descriptive of a spiritual one, were offended at the meanness of Christ's appearance on earth, and would not own him for that Messiah whom their prophets had foretold; though these very prophets, when they used a less figurative language, had described him, as he really was, *a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief.*

To these books are added several others, poetical and moral, which administer much instruction and matter of meditation to devout minds,

The New Testament contains first the simple history of Christ, as recorded in the four Gospels. In this history also are delivered those excellent instructions which our Saviour occasionally gave his disciples; the precepts and the example blended together.

To the Gospels succeeds an account of some of the principal apostles; together with the early state of the Christian church, and the opening of the Gospel to the Gentile world.

The epistles of several of the apostles, particularly of St. Paul, to some of the new established churches, make another part. Our Saviour had promised to endow his disciples with power from

on

on high to complete the great work of publishing the Gospel; and in the epistles that work is completed. The truths and doctrines of the Christian religion are here still more unfolded and enforced.

The sacred volume concludes with the revelations of St. John, which are supposed to contain a prophetic description of the future state of the church. Some of these prophecies, especially against the pope, it is supposed, are already fulfilled; and others, which now, as sublime descriptions only rouse the imagination, will, probably, in the future ages of the church, be the objects of the understanding also.

It cannot be supposed that books so very ancient, and containing such a variety of matter, should be without their difficulties. In the New Testament, indeed, few difficulties are found but what arise from Jewish modes of speaking; and these are easily understood by those who will be at any pains in examining expositors:

The chief difficulties, with regard to the Old Testament, relate to its *authorising cruelty*, and *allowing indulgences* which the Gospel forbids.

With regard to the former, the same acts of cruelty are everywhere committed *now*; but we consider them *now*, without cavilling at them, as the ordinary course of human events. Yet the same divine authority permits them *now* which permitted

permitted them *before*: only then the arm of Providence was laid bare, now it is concealed. The fact is, the world was then, as it is now, in a state of trial; and violence and wickedness of every kind, while men are free agents, must be of course the appendages of it. So that, unless we cavil at God's whole scheme of a state of trial, we have no ground to cavil at any separate part.

Then again, as to God's allowing *indulgences* under the law which the Gospel does not allow, we must consider the gradual progress of God's moral government. The law was introduced gradually; the Gospel was introduced gradually; and a purer state was always founded on an impurer. *The times of this ignorance*, says the apostle, before the Gospel, God winked at; but now he commandeth men everywhere to repent. Nor does it appear that God's moral government is yet complete. The purity of Christianity is still mixed with the wickedness of man. The Christian religion, therefore, we suppose, will undergo a new revolution, which is pointed out, however obscurely, in the revelations of St. John. So that, as religion now forbids many things which were practised before, so religion may allow many things now which may be forbidden in its still more purified state.

Thus

Thus then the Old Testament and the New are connected, and make together that *word of God* which we are enjoined to *honour*; and this honour, we may be assured, is best shewn by applying these holy writings to the *uses* for which God intended them. We should take the Bible into our hands, as we should approach a divine instructor, with a habit of mind, not to *cavil*, not to create *objections*, not to quote *wanton*ly, not to apply to *ludicrous* purposes (all which is certainly *dishonouring* it); but with a pious inclination to improve our hearts, by learning from it the duties of religion, by learning from it how to *live* and how to *die*.

This divine book furnishes a great variety of matter for our meditation. *It is profitable*, we are told, *for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and instruction*. When we find in it *moral rules* laid down for our conduct, we should compare our actions with those rules; and where *motives* are assigned, we should try our hearts by these too, and examine whether they are right in the sight of God. When it instructs us to have *our conversation in heaven*, and to *set our affections on things above*, we ought to examine ourselves, whether *heaven* or the *world* is more the object of our *desires*. When the *mercies* of the *Gospel* are recited, they should raise our *joy*, our *love*, and *thankfulness*;

ness; and when we read the denunciations of God's wrath against sin, our minds should receive with reverence the awful impression. When the good actions of holy men are recorded, we should consider them as recorded for our example; and when their frailties are recited, these should teach us diffidence and humility. In short, our fears, our hopes, our faith, our joy, our love and gratitude, have all sufficient objects to engage them. It should be our great endeavour to transfuse the spirit of this holy book into our lives; and he who can do this the best, may be assured that he honours it the most.

The last part of our duty to God is, to serve him truly all the days of our life.

To serve God truly all the days of our life implies two things: first, the mode of this service; and secondly, the term of it.

First, we must serve God truly. We must not rest satisfied with the outward action; but must take care that every action be founded on a proper motive. It is the motive alone that makes an action acceptable to God. The hypocrite may fast twice in the week, and give alms of all that he possesseſſ; but if his fasts and his alms are intended as matter of ostentation only, neither the one nor the other

other is that true service which God requires. God requires the *heart*: he requires that an earnest *desire of acting agreeably to his will* should be the *general spring of our actions*; and this will give even an indifferent action a value in his sight.

As we are enjoined to serve God *truly*, so are we enjoined to serve him *all the days of our life*. As far as human frailties will permit, we should persevere in a constant tenor of obedience. That lax behaviour, which, instead of making a steady progress, is continually relapsing into former errors, and running the same round of sinning and repenting, is rather the life of an *irreconcileable sinner* than of a *pious Christian*. He certainly who, in the general tenor of his life, does not endeavour to get the better of his bad habits, and to keep advancing towards Christian perfection, but suffers himself at intervals entirely to *lose sight* of his calling, cannot be really serious in his profession: he is at a great distance from serving God *truly all the days of his life*, and has no scriptural ground to hope much from his mercy.

That man, whether placed in high estate or low, has reached the summit of human happiness who is *truly serious* in the *service of his Creator*. The things of this world may *engage*, but cannot *ingross* his attention; its sorrows and its joys may *affect*, but cannot *disconcert* him. No man, he knows,

can faithfully serve two masters. He hath hired himself to one ; that great Master, whose commands he reveres, whose favour he seeks, whose displeasure alone is the real object of his fears, and whose rewards alone are the real objects of his hope. Every thing else is trivial in his sight. The world may sooth, or it may threaten him ; he perseveres steadily in the service of God, and in that perseverance feels his happiness every day the more established.

## LECTURE XIII.

*Duties to man divided into general and particular—general duties considered—loving our neighbour as ourselves—the phrase explained—the nature of christian benevolence—of private friendship, and love to our country—doing to others as we would have them do to us—the rule properly guarded—the happiness derived to individuals and society from the observance of the two rules, of loving our neighbour as ourselves, and doing to others as we would have them do to us.*

HAVING considered those duties, which we owe immediately to God, we next consider those which have a more immediate connection with man. These, as disposed in the summary before us, may be divided into general and particular duties—such as concern mankind in general, and such as arise from particular relations.

Let us consider, first, such as are general. *We must love our neighbour as ourselves, and do to others as we would have them do to us.* These two rules may not improperly be called an *appendix to the law*. Upon every emergence a *law in point* may not be ready; it may not indeed exist. In many cases

cases we must be more at liberty. What law, for instance, can direct all those little nameless offices of friendly intercourse between man and man, which preserve the peace of society, and form the greatest part of its happiness? What law can direct our gratitude? or can enter into all those minute distinctions which make the circumstances of one man different from those of another? In many cases, therefore, not taken notice of by law, we are here enjoined to make the appeal to our own *feelings*. The former of these great rules regards our *affections*; the latter, our *actions*.

*First, we must love our neighbour as ourselves.* The meaning of the word *neighbour* our Saviour settled in the parable of the good Samaritan; from which it appears, that all mankind are to be esteemed our neighbours. The *mode* also of this affection is defined. *We must love our neighbour as ourselves.* How then do we love ourselves? Self-love, we know, is a steady principle, prompting us at all times to avoid pain and pursue happiness. For though men are often the voluntary authors of their own misery, yet they act under a blind belief, that the present pleasure, in a sinful action, may over-balance the pernicious consequence. *Their own happiness is always intended.*

If,

If, therefore, the love we owe our neighbour must be measured by the love we bear ourselves, it must be a steady principle prompting us at all times to *relieve his distresses* and *promote his happiness*.

But it may be objected that love is *involuntary*; —that we like and dislike from humour, prejudice, and caprice: how then is an affection, so little in our power, prescribed as a duty?

This is easily answered. A general abstracted benevolence, which is ready to do good to all, and which delights in the good of all, may exist without any of that particular attachment to the individual, which is usually called love; and this is the temper which Christianity would encourage— an affection to the whole species, and particularly a compassion to the distressed part of it. The good Samaritan would have relieved any man in the same circumstances in which he found the distressed traveller. To that man he had no particular attachment; he had never before seen him.

Here a question may arise about *private friendship*, and *love to our country*: on both which points the Scripture is silent.

It may be so; it was our Saviour's design to *enlarge* our affections rather than *contract* them.

He,

He, who was so well acquainted with human nature, certainly knew, that if universal benevolence were attained, all the inferior degrees of affection to relations, friends, and country, would follow of course. Like the smaller circles on the surface of a disturbed lake, they would necessarily be included in the larger.

The regulation of our *affections* leads naturally to the regulation of our *actions*. *We must do to others as we would have them do to us.*

Are we then to be the dupes of any extravagant claim that may be made upon us?

By no means. This is a perversion of the rule. We are required only to do to others what we might *reasonably* expect they should do to us. Hence all unreasonable claims are excluded. With this restriction the rule before us is truly admirable, and should be ever in our minds, when we have intercourse with others. Scarcely any case can occur in which it will not direct us right. Our practice is not here confounded by nice distinctions or subtle points of morality. We are referred at once to our own breasts. Our own *feelings* are the criterion. We have only to ask ourselves, whether the action in dispute be such, as we *should think might reasonably be done to ourselves?* An answer to this question

tion will solve the most difficult case between us and our neighbour. And, indeed, if we attend sufficiently to this rule, we shall scarcely need any other.

From the exertion of *universal benevolence*, inculcated in these two rules, every happiness must arise of which men are capable, either as *individuals* or as *members of society*. The first, which regulates our affections, leads directly to our *own happiness*. If we love others as we love ourselves, we must of course divest our minds of all those vile passions which are the great sources of our misery; and when envy, malice, revenge, and other bad inclinations are rooted out, the kind and friendly affections will of course take place; at least the ground is well prepared for their reception.

As the observance of the first rule leads directly to our *own happiness*: the observance of the second leads directly to the *happiness of others*. The mischiefs which distress society arise chiefly from *violence* and *fraud*. Both these will be driven out through the prevalence of this principle; for who would himself wish to be the object of either?

The *signs*, which accompany the divine temper here inculcated, are a general *obliging behaviour* in our ordinary conversation, and a *gentleness of manners*

mers to all men, whether they are superiors, equals, or inferiors; a generous candour towards their faults; and a readiness to bear with their little infirmities, prejudices, and humours. All this will be the *natural overflowing* of a benevolent heart. And though we do not say, that whoever possesses an obliging *civility of manners* must of course also have a *benevolent heart* (for an obliging behaviour is sometimes *natural* and sometimes *assumed*); yet it may not be improper for those who wish to attain this great principle to begin with a gentleness of behaviour, as an excellent mean to soften the heart and render it susceptible of benign impressions. Such a behaviour may, perhaps, be more assistant to us in *attaining* the principle itself than at first appears.

## LECTURE XIV.

*Duties owing to particular persons—duty of children to parents—respect and obedience—in what the former consists—in what the latter—succouring a parent—brotherly affection—obedience to law—founded on the advantages of society.*

FROM the two grand principles of loving our neighbour as ourselves, and of doing to others as we would have them do to us, which regulate our social intercourse in general, we proceed to those more confined duties, which arise from particular relations, connections, and stations in life.

Among these, we are first taught, as indeed the order of nature directs, to consider the great *duty of children to parents.*

The two points to be insisted on are *respect* and *obedience*. Both these should naturally spring from *love*, to which parents have the highest claim: and in general we hope parents behave to their children in a manner both to deserve and to obtain their love.

But if the kindness of the parent be not such as can work on the affections of the child, yet still the parent has a title to respect and obedience, on the

the principle of *duty*; a principle which the voice of nature dictates, which reason inculcates, which human laws and human customs all join to enforce, and which the word of God strictly commands.

The child will shew *respect* to his parent, by treating him at all times with deference. He will consult his parent's inclination, and shew a readiness in a thousand nameless trifles, to conform himself to it. He will never peevishly contradict his parent; and when he offers a contrary opinion he will offer it modestly. *Respect* will teach him also not only to put the best colouring on the infirmities of his parent; but even if those infirmities be great, it will soften and screen them as much as possible from the public eye.

*Obedience* goes a step farther, and supposes a positive command. In things unlawful, indeed, the parental authority cannot bind: but this case rarely happens. The great danger is on the other side; that children, through obstinacy or sullenness, should refuse their parents' lawful commands: to the observance of all which, however inconvenient to themselves, they are tied by various motives; and, above all, by the command of God, who, in his sacred denunciations against sin, ranks disobedience to parents among

the worst \*.—They are farther bound, not only to obey the commands of their parents, but to obey them *cheerfully*: he does but half his duty who does it not from his heart.

There remains still a third part of filial duty, which peculiarly belongs to children when grown up. This the catechism calls *succouring*, or ministering to the necessities of the parent, either in the way of managing his affairs, when he is less able to manage them himself, or in supplying his wants, should he need assistance in that way. And this the child should do on the united principles of *love*, *duty*, and *gratitude*. The hypocritical Jew would sometimes evade this duty by dedicating to *sacred uses* what should have been expended in *assisting his parent*. Our Saviour sharply rebukes this perversion of duty, and gives him to understand, that no pretence of serving God can cover the neglect of assisting a parent. And if no pretence of serving God can do it, surely every other pretence must be still more unnatural.

Under this head also we may consider that attention and love which are due to other relations, especially that mutual affection which should subsist between brothers. The name of brother

\* Rom. i. 30.

expresses

expresses the highest degree of tenderness, and is generally used in Scripture as a term of peculiar endearment, to call men to the practice of social virtue. It reminds them of every kindness which man can shew to man. If, then, we ought to treat *all mankind* with the affection of *brothers*, with what kindness ought we to treat those who are *really such*?

The next part of our duty is to honour and obey the king, and all that are put in authority under him.

By the king, and all that are put in authority under him, are meant the various parts of the government we live under, of which the king is the head: and the meaning of the precept is, that we ought to live in dutiful submission to the laws of our country.

Society and government are united. We cannot have one without the other; and we submit to the inconveniences for the sake of the advantages.

The end of society is mutual *safety* and *convenience*: without it even *safety* could in no degree be obtained; the good would become a prey to the bad, nay the very human species to the beasts of the field. Still less could we obtain the *conveniences of life*, which cannot be had without the

labour of many. If every man depended on himself for what he enjoyed, how destitute would be the situation of human affairs !

But even safety and convenience are not the *only* fruits of society. Man, living merely by himself, would be an ignorant, unpolished savage. It is the intercourse of society which cultivates the human mind. One man's knowledge and experience is built upon another's ; and so the great edifice of science and polished life is reared.

To enjoy these advantages, therefore, men joined in society ; and hence it became necessary that government should be established. Magistrates are created ; laws made ; taxes submitted to ; and every one, instead of righting himself, (except in mere self-defence,) is enjoined to appeal to the laws he lives under, as the best security of his life and property.

## LECTURE XV.

*Duty to our teachers and instructors—arising from the great importance of knowledge and religion—and the great necessity of gaining habits of attention, and of virtue in our youth—analogy of youth and manhood to this world and the next.*

We are next enjoined to submit ourselves to all our governors, teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters. Here another species of government is pointed out: the *laws of society* are meant to govern our *riper years*: the *instructions of our teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters*, are meant to guide our *youth*.

By our teachers, spiritual pastors, and masters, are meant all those who have the care of our education, and of our instruction in religion, whom we are to listen to with humility and attention as the means of our advancement in knowledge and religion. The instructions we receive from them, whether in science or religion, are unquestionably subject to *our own judgment* in future life. But during our *youth*, it is highly proper for us to pay a dutiful submission to their instructions, as we cannot yet be supposed to have formed any judg-

ment of our own. At that early age, it should be our endeavour to *acquire knowledge*; and afterwards *unprejudiced to form our opinions*.

The duty which young people owe to their instructors cannot be shewn better than in the effect which the instructions they receive have upon them. They would do well, therefore, to consider the advantages of an early attention to these two things, both of great importance, *knowledge* and *religion*.

The great use of *knowledge* in all its various branches (to which the learned languages are generally considered as an introduction) is to free the mind from the prejudices of ignorance, and to give it juster and more enlarged conceptions than are the mere growth of rude nature. By reading, you add the experience of others to your own. It is the improvement of the mind chiefly that makes the difference between man and man, and gives one man a real superiority over another.

Besides, the mind must be employed. The lower orders of men have their attention much engrossed by those employments in which the necessities of life engage them; and it is happy they have. Labour stands in the room of education, and fills up those vacancies of mind, which, in a state of idleness, would be engrossed by vice. And if they, who have more leisure, do

not

not substitute something in the room of this, their minds also will become the prey of vice; and the more so, as they have the means to indulge it more in their power. A vacant mind is exactly that house mentioned in the gospel which the devil found empty. In he entered; and taking with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, they took possession. It is an undoubted truth, that one vice indulged introduces others. Like the virtues, they usually follow in a train.—If, then, the mind *must* be employed, what can fill its vacuities more rationally than the acquisition of knowledge? Let us therefore thank God for the opportunities he hath afforded us, and not turn into a curse those means of leisure which might become so great a blessing.

But however necessary to us *knowledge* may be, *religion* we know is infinitely more so: one adorns a man and gives him superiority and rank in life; but the other is absolutely essential to his happiness.

In the midst of youth, health, and abundance, the world is apt to appear a very gay and pleasing scene; it engages our desires, and in a degree also satisfies them. But it is wisdom to consider, that a time will come, when youth, health, and fortune will all fail us; and if disappointment

and vexation do not sour our taste for pleasure, at least sickness and infirmities will destroy it. In these gloomy seasons, and above all at the approach of death, what will become of us without religion? When this world fails, where shall we fly if we expect no refuge in another? Without holy hope in God, and resignation to his will, and trust in him for deliverance, what is there that can secure us against the evils of life?

The great utility, therefore, of knowledge and religion being thus apparent, it is highly incumbent on us to pay a studious attention to them *in our youth*; if we do not, it is more than probable we never shall; we shall grow old in *ignorance* by neglecting the one; and old in *vice* by despising the other.

For improvement in *knowledge*, youth is certainly the fittest season. The mind is then ready to receive any impression. It is free from all that care and attention which, in riper age, the affairs of life bring with them. The memory too is then stronger, and better able to acquire the rudiments of knowledge; and as the mind is then void of ideas, it is more suited to those parts of learning which are conversant in words. Besides, there is sometimes in youth a modesty and ductility, which in advanced years (if those years especially

(especially have been left a prey to ignorance) become self-sufficiency and prejudice; and these effectually bar up all the inlets to knowledge. But, above all, unless habits of attention and application are early gained, we shall scarcely acquire them afterwards. The *inconsiderate youth* seldom reflects upon this, nor knows his loss till he know also that it cannot be repaired.

Nor is youth more the season to acquire knowledge than to form *religious habits*. It is a great point to get habit on the side of virtue; it will make every thing smooth and easy. The earliest principles are generally the most lasting; and those of a religious cast are seldom wholly lost. Whereas he who has suffered habits of vice to get possession of *his youth*, has little chance of being brought back to a sense of religion. In a common course of things it rarely happens. Some calamity must rouse him. He must be awakened by a storm, or sleep for ever. How much better is it then to make *that easy to us* which we know *is best*? and to form those habits now which *bereafter* we shall wish we had formed?

There are who would restrain youth from imbibing *any* religious principles till they can judge for themselves, lest they should imbibe prejudice for truth. But why should not the same

caution be used in science also ; and the minds of youth left void of all impressions ? The experiment, I fear, in both cases would be dangerous. If the mind were left uncultivated during so long a period, though nothing else should find entrance, vice certainly would ; and it would make the larger shoots, as the soil would be vacant. A boy had better receive knowledge and religion mixed with error than none at all. For when the mind is set a thinking, it may deposit its prejudices by degrees, and refine itself at last ; but in a state of stagnation it will infallibly become foul.

To conclude : Our youth bears the same proportion to our more advanced life, as this world does to the next. In this life we must form and cultivate those habits of virtue which must qualify us for a better state. If we neglect them here, and contract habits of an opposite kind, instead of gaining that exalted state which is promised to our improvement, we shall of course sink into that state which is adapted to the habits we have formed.

Exactly thus is youth introductory to manhood ; to which it is, properly speaking, a state of preparation. During this season we must qualify ourselves

ourselves for the parts we are to act hereafter. In manhood we bear the fruit which has in youth been planted. If we have sauntered away our youth we must expect to be ignorant men. If indolence and inattention have taken an early possession of us, they will probably increase as we advance in life, and make us a burden to ourselves and useless to society. If, again, we suffer ourselves to be misled by vicious inclinations, they will daily get new strength and end in dissolute lives. But if we cultivate our minds in our youth, attain habits of attention and industry, of virtue, and sobriety, we shall find ourselves well prepared to act our future parts in life; and what, above all things, ought to be our care, by gaining this *command over ourselves*, we shall be more able to resist every new temptation as we advance in life.

## LECTURE XVI.

*Behaviour to superiors—the word betters explained—probable reasons for God's appointing various distinctions among men—happiness and misery not connected with station.*

**W**e are next enjoined to order ourselves lowly and reverently to all our betters.

By our betters are meant those who are in a superior station of life to our own; and by ordering ourselves lowly and reverently towards them, is meant paying them that respect which is due to their station. The word *bettters* includes two kinds of persons to whom our respect is due—those who have a *natural* claim to it, and those who have an *acquired* one; that is, a claim arising from some particular situation in life.

Among the first are all our superior relations; not only parents, but all other relations, who are in a line above us: all these have a *natural* claim to our respect. There is a respect also due from youth to age, which is always becoming, and tends to keep youth within the bounds of modesty.

To others respect is due from those particular stations which arise from society and government.

ment. *Fear God*, says the text; *and*, it adds, *honour the king*. It is due also from many other situations in life. Employments, honours, and even wealth will exact it; and all may justly exact it in a proper degree.

That some men should have more authority than others, we can easily see is absolutely necessary for the purposes of society: but among men, who are all born equal, it may perhaps be inquired, why the goods of life should be distributed in so unequal a proportion?

Though we can but very inadequately trace the wisdom of God in his works, yet very wise reasons appear for this variety in the gifts of fortune. It seems necessary both in a *civil* and in a *moral* light.

In a *civil* light, it is the necessary accompaniment of those various employments on which depend the advantages of society. Like the stones of a regular building, some must range higher and some lower; some must support, and others be supported; some must form the strength of the building, and others its ornament; but all unite in producing one regular and proportioned whole. If, then, different employments are necessary, of course different degrees of wealth, honour, and consequence must follow; a variety

of

of distinctions and obligations, in short, different ranks and a subordination must take place.

Again in a *moral* light the disproportion of wealth and other worldly adjuncts gives a range to the more extensive exercise of virtue. Some virtues could but faintly exist on the plan of an equality. If none abounded, there were little room for temperance; if none suffered need, there were as little for patience. Other virtues again could hardly exist at all. Who could practise generosity or charity, when neither virtue had an object? who, humility, where all ambitious desires were excluded?

Since, then, Providence, in scattering these various gifts, proposes ultimately the good of man, it is our duty to acquiesce in this order, and to *behave ourselves lowly and reverently* (not with servility but with a decent respect) *to all our superiors.*

Before I conclude this subject it may be proper to observe, in vindication of the ways of Providence, that we are not to suppose *happiness* and *misery* necessarily connected with *riches* and *poverty*. Each condition hath its particular sources both of pleasure and pain, unknown to the other.

Those

Those in elevated stations have a thousand latent pangs, of which their inferiors have no idea: while their inferiors again have as many pleasures which the others cannot taste. I speak only of such modes of happiness or misery as arise immediately from different stations. Misery, indeed, from a variety of other causes, men of every station feel, either when God lays his hand upon us in sickness or misfortune, or when, by our own follies and vices, we become the ministers of our own distress. The means of happiness, as far as station can procure them, seem equally in the power of all, if they are not wanting to themselves.

Let each of us then do his duty in that station which Providence hath assigned him; ever remembering, that the next world will soon destroy all distinctions among the sons of men, except one—the distinction between good and bad.

## LECTURE XVII.

*The injury of words—evil-speaking—lying—an equivocation—breach of promise—slander.*

**W**E are next instructed to *burt nobody by word or deed*; to be true and just in all our dealings; to bear no malice nor hatred in our hearts; to keep our hands from picking and stealing, our tongues from evil-speaking, lying, and slandering.

The duties comprehended in these words are a little transposed. What should class under one head is brought under another. To *burt nobody, by word or deed*, is the general proposition. The under parts should follow: First, *to keep the tongue from evil-speaking, lying, and slandering*; which is *to burt nobody by word*: secondly, *to be true and just in all our dealings*; and *to keep our bands from picking and stealing*; which is, *to burt nobody by deed*. As to the injunction, *to bear no malice nor hatred in our hearts*, it belongs properly to neither of these heads, but is a distinct one by itself. The duties being thus separated, I shall proceed to explain them.

And, first, of injuring our neighbour by our words. This may be done, we find, in three ways;

ways; by *evil-speaking*, by *lying*, and by *slandering*.

By *evil-speaking* is meant speaking ill of our neighbour; but on a supposition, that this ill is the truth. In some circumstances it is certainly right to speak ill of our neighbour; as when we are called on in a court of justice to give our evidence; or, when we can set any one right in his opinion of a person in whom he is about to put an improper confidence. Nor can there be any harm in speaking of a bad action which hath been determined in a court of justice, or is otherwise become notorious.

But on the other hand it is highly disallowable to speak wantonly of the characters of others from common fame; because in a thousand instances we find that stories, which have no better foundation, are misrepresented. They are, perhaps, only half-told; they have been heard through the medium of malice or envy; some favourable circumstance hath been omitted; some foreign circumstance hath been added; some trifling circumstance hath been exaggerated; the motive, the provocation, or perhaps the reparation, hath been concealed; in short, the representation of the fact is some way or other totally different from the fact itself.

But

But even when we have the best evidence of a bad action, with all its circumstances before us, we surely indulge a very ill-natured pleasure in spreading the shame of an offending brother. We can do no good; and we may do harm. We may weaken his good resolutions by exposing him; we may harden him against the world. Perhaps it may be his first bad action. Perhaps nobody is privy to it but ourselves. Let us give him at least one trial. Let us not cast the first stone. Which of our lives could stand so strict a scrutiny? He only who is without sin himself can have an excuse for treating his brother with severity. At the same time he would be the last person that would do it.

Let us next consider *lying*, which is an intention to deceive by falsehood in our words. To warn us against lying, we should do well to consider the *folly*, the *meanness*, and the *wickedness* of it.

The *folly* of lying consists in its defeating its own purpose. A habit of lying is generally in the end detected; and, after a detection, the liar, instead of deceiving, will not even be believed when he happens to speak the truth. Nay every

every single lie is attended with such a variety of circumstances which lead to a detection, that it is often discovered. The use generally made of a lie is to cover a fault; but as the end is seldom answered, we only aggravate what we wish to conceal. In point even of prudence, an honest confession would serve us better.

The *meanness* of lying arises from the cowardice which it implies. We dare not boldly and nobly speak the truth, but have recourse to low subterfuges, which always argue a sordid and disingenuous mind. Hence it is that, in the fashionable world, the word *liar* is always considered as a term of peculiar reproach.

The *wickedness* of lying consists in its perverting one of the greatest blessings of God, the use of speech. Truth is the great bond of society. Falsehood of course tends to its dissolution. If one man may lie, why not another? And if there is no mutual trust among men, there is an end of all intercourse and dealing.

An *equivocation* is nearly related to a lie. It is an intention to deceive under words of a double meaning; or, words which, literally speaking, are true; and is equally criminal with a downright breach of truth. When St. Peter asked

Sapphira

Sapphira whether her husband had sold the land for so much? She answered, he had: and literally she spoke the truth; for he had sold it for that sum included in a larger. But having an intention to deceive, we find the apostle considered the equivocation as a lie.

In short, it is the *intention to deceive* which is criminal: the mode of deception, like the vehicle in which poison is conveyed, is of no consequence. A nod or sign may convey a lie as effectually as the most deceitful language.

Under the head of lying may be mentioned a *breach of promise*. While a resolution remains in our breasts it is subject to our own review; but when we make another person a party with us, an engagement is made; and every engagement, though only of the lightest kind, should be punctually observed. A breach of promise is still worse than a lie. A lie is simply a breach of *truth*; but a breach of promise is a breach both of *truth* and *trust*.

*Forgetfulness* is a weak excuse: it only shews how little we are affected by so solemn an engagement. Should we forget to call for a sum of money, of which we were in want, at an appointed time? Or do we think a

solemn promise of less value than a sum of money?

Having considered evil-speaking and lying, let us next consider *fla*ndering. By *fla*ndering we mean injuring our neighbour's character by falsehood. Here we still rise higher in the scale of injurious words. Slander ing our neighbour is the greatest injury which words can do him, and is, therefore, worse than either evil-speaking or lying. The mischief of this sin depends on the value of our characters. All men, unless they be past feeling, desire naturally to be thought well of by others. A good character is one of the principal means of our being serviceable in the world. Among numbers, the very bread they eat depends upon it. What aggravated injury, therefore, do we bring upon every man whose name we slander? And what is still worse, the *injury* is *irreparable*. If you defraud a man, restore what you took, and the injury is repaired. But if you slander him, it is not in your power to shut up all the ears and all the mouths to which your tale may have had access. The evil spreads like the winged seeds of some noxious plants, which scatter mischief on a breath

of

of air, and disperse it on every side, and beyond prevention.

It may just be added, that a slander may be spread, as a lie may be told, in various ways. We may do it by an insinuation, as well as in a direct manner. We may spread it in a secret, or propagate it under the colour of friendship.

We may consider also that it is a species of slander, and often a very malignant one, to lessen the merits or exaggerate the failings of others; as it is likewise to omit defending a misrepresented character, or to let others bear the blame of our offences.

## LECTURE XVIII.

*Injurious actions—law and justice different things—illustrated by several instances—malice and hatred arising from the resentment of injuries—arising from envy.*

HAVING thus considered injurious words, let us next consider injurious actions. On this head we are enjoined to *keep our hands from picking and stealing, and to be true and just in all our dealings.*

As to *theft*, it is a crime of so odious and base a nature, that one should imagine no person, who hath had the least tincture of a virtuous education, even though driven to necessity, could be led into it. — I shall not, therefore, enter into a dissuasive from this crime, but go on with the explanation of the other part of the injunction, and see what it is to be *true and just in all our dealings.*

*Justice* is even still more, if possible, the support of society than *truth*; inasmuch as a man may be *more injurious* by his actions than by his words. It is for this reason that the whole force of human law is bent to restrain injustice,

and the happiness of every society will increase in proportion to this restraint.

We very much err, however, if we suppose that every thing *within the bounds of law* is *justice*. The law was intended only for *bad men*; and it is impossible to make the meshes of it so strait but that many great enormities will escape. The well-meaning man, therefore, knowing that the law was not made for him, consults a better guide, his own conscience, informed by religion. And, indeed, the great difference between the *good* and the *bad* man consists in this: the good man will do nothing but what his *conscience will allow*: the bad man will do any thing *which the law cannot reach*.

It would, indeed, be endless to describe the various ways in which a man may be dishonest within the limits of law. They are as various as our intercourse with mankind. Some of the most obvious of them I shall cursorily mention.

In matters of commerce the knave has many opportunities. The different qualities of the same commodity; the different modes of adulteration; the specious arts of vending; the frequent ignorance in purchasing; and a variety of other circumstances open an endless field to the ingenuity of fraud. The honest fair-dealer, in the mean time, has only one rule, which is, that

all

all arts, however common in business, which are intended to *deceive*, are *unlawful*. It may be added, on this head, that if any one, conscious of having been a transgressor, is desirous of repairing his fault, *restitution* is by all means necessary; till that be made he continues in a course of injustice.

Again, in matters of contract, a man has many opportunities of being dishonest within the bounds of law. He may be strict in observing the letter of an agreement, when the equitable meaning requires a laxer interpretation; or he can take the laxer interpretation when it serves his purpose; and at the loop-hole of some ambiguous expression, exclude the literal meaning, though it be undoubtedly the true one.

The same iniquity appears in withholding from another his just right, or in putting him to expence in recovering it. The movements of the law are slow, and in many cases cannot be otherwise. But he who takes the advantage of this to injure his neighbour proves himself an undoubted knave.

It is a species of injustice also to withhold a debt when we have ability to pay, or to run into debt when we have not that ability. The former can proceed only from a bad disposition: the latter from suffering our desires to exceed our station. Some are excused on this head as men of generous principles, which they cannot confine.

But what is their generosity? They assist one man by injuring another. And what good arises to society from this? Such persons cannot act on principle; and we need not hesitate to rank them with those who run into debt to gratify their own selfish inclinations. One man desires the elegancies of life; another desires what he thinks an equal good, the reputation of generosity.

Oppression is another species of injustice, by which, in a thousand ways under the cover of law, we may take the advantage of the superiority of our power, either to crush an inferior, or humble him to our designs.

Ingratitude is another. A loan we know claims a legal return. And is the obligation less if instead of a loan we receive a kindness? The law, indeed, says nothing on this point of immorality; but an honest conscience will be very loud in the condemnation of it.

We may be unjust also in our resentment, by carrying it beyond what reason and religion prescribe.

But it would be endless to describe the various ways in which injustice discovers itself. In truth, almost every omission of duty may be resolved into it.

The next precept is *to bear no malice nor hatred in our hearts.*

The malice and hatred of our hearts arise in the first place from injurious treatment ; and surely no man when he is injured can at first help feeling that he is so. But Christianity requires that we should subdue these feelings, if there is any rancour in them, as soon as possible, and *not suffer the sun to go down upon our wrath.* Various are the passages of Scripture which inculcate the forgiveness of injuries. Indeed no point is more laboured than this ; and with reason, because no temper is more productive of evil, both to ourselves and others, than a malicious one. The sensations of a mind burning with revenge are beyond description ; and as we are at these seasons very unable to judge coolly, and of course liable to carry our resentment too far, the consequence is, that in our rage we may do a thousand things which can never be atoned for, and of which we may repent as long as we live. Besides, one act draws on another, and retaliation keeps the quarrel alive.

The gospel, therefore, ever gracious and kind to man in all its precepts, enjoins us to check all these violent emotions, and to leave our cause in the hands of God. *Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord ;* and he who, in opposition to

this precept, takes vengeance into his own hands, and cherishes the malice and hatred of his heart, may assure himself that he has not yet learned to be a Christian. These precepts, perhaps, may not entirely agree with modern principles of honour: but let the man of honour see to that. The maxims of the world cannot change the truth of the Gospel.

Nay, even in recovering our just right, or in pursuing a criminal to justice, we should take care that it be not done in the spirit of retaliation and revenge. If these be our motives, though we make the law our instrument, we are equally guilty.

But besides injurious treatment, the *malice and hatred of our hearts* have often another source, and that is *envy*; and thus in the Litany, *envy, malice, and hatred* are all joined together with great propriety. The emotions of envy are generally cooler, and less violent than those which arise from the resentment of injury; so that envy is seldom so mischievous in its effects as revenge: but with regard to ourselves it is altogether as bad, and full as destructive of the spirit of Christianity. What is the religion of that man, who, instead of thanking Heaven for the blessings he receives, is fretting himself continually with a disagreeable comparison between himself and some other?

But

But to omit the *wickedness* of envy how *absurd* and *foolish* is it, in a world where we must necessarily expect much real misery, to be perniciously inventive in producing it? We cannot enjoy what we have, because another we suppose has more wealth, a fairer fame, or perhaps more merit than ourselves. We are miserable because others are happy.

Besides, what *ignorance!* We see only the glaring outside of things. Under all that envied glare, many unseen distresses may lurk from which our station may be free; for our merciful Creator seems to have bestowed happiness, as far as station is concerned, with great equality among all his creatures.

In conclusion, therefore, let it be the great object of our attention, and the subject of our prayers, to rid our minds of all this cursed intrusion of evil thoughts, whether they proceed from *malice* and *hatred*, or from *envy*. Let all our malicious thoughts soften into charity and benevolence; and let us *forgive one another as God, for Christ's sake, hath forgiven us*. As for our envious thoughts, as far as they relate to externals, let them subside in humility, *acquiescence*, and *submission* to the will of God. And

when we are tempted to envy the good qualities of others, let us spurn so base a conception, and change it into a generous emulation,—into an endeavour to raise ourselves to an equality with our rival, and not to depress him to a level with us.

## LECTURE XIX.

*Duties owing to ourselves—temperance—sobriety—chastity—rules for preserving the purity of our thoughts, words, and actions.*

THUS far the duties we have considered come most properly under the head of those which we owe to our neighbour; what follows relates rather to ourselves. On this head we are instructed to *keep our bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity.*

Though our souls should be our great concern, yet, as they are nearly connected with our bodies, and as the impurity of the one contaminates the other, a great degree of moral attention is of course due to our bodies also.

As our first station is in this world, to which our bodies particularly belong, they are formed with such appetites as are requisite to our commodious living in it; and the rule given us is, *to use the world so as not to abuse it.* St. Paul, by a beautiful allusion, calls our bodies the *temples of the Holy Ghost;* by which he means to impress us with a strong idea of their dignity, and to deter us from debasing by low pleasures what

should be the seat of so much purity. To youth these cautions are above measure necessary, because their passions and appetites are strong, their reason and judgment weak. They are prone to pleasure, and void of reflection. How, therefore, these young adventurers in life may best steer their course, and use this sinful world so as not to abuse it, is a consideration well worth their attention. Let us then see under what regulations their appetites should be restrained.

By *keeping our bodies in temperance* is meant avoiding excess in eating, with regard both to the *quantity* and *quality* of our food. We should neither eat more than our stomachs can well bear, nor be nice and delicate in our eating.

To *preserve the body in health* is the end of *eating*; and they who regulate themselves merely by this end, who eat wholesome food without choice or distinction, paying no regard to the pleasure of eating, observe perhaps the best rule of temperance. They go rather indeed beyond temperance, and may be called abstemious. A man may be temperate, and yet allow himself a little more indulgence. Great care, however, is here necessary; and the more, as perhaps no precise rule can be affixed after we have passed the first great limit, and let the palate loose among variety.

variety \*. Our own discretion must be our guide, which should be constantly kept awake by considering the many bad consequences which attend a breach of temperance. Young men in the full vigour of health do not consider these things; but as age comes on, and different maladies begin to appear, they may perhaps repent they did not, at an earlier period, observe the rules of temperance.

In a moral and religious light the consequences of intemperance are still worse. To enjoy a comfortable meal when it comes before us is allowable: but he who suffers his mind to dwell upon the pleasures of eating, and makes them the employment of his thoughts, has at least opened one source of mental corruption †.

After all, he who would most perfectly enjoy the pleasures of the table, such as they are, must look for them within the bounds of temperance.

—Nam variz res.

Ut noceant homini, credas memor illius escas,  
Quæ simplex olim tibi federit. At simul assis  
Misferis elixa, simul conchylia turdis,  
Dulcia se in bilem vertent, stomachoq. tumultum  
Lenta feret pituita. ————— Hon.

† —Corpus omisum

Hesternis vitiis, animum quoq. pregravat una,  
Atq. affigit humo divinæ particulam auræ. Hon.

The palate accustomed to satiety hath lost its tone; and the greatest sensualists have been brought to confess, that the coarsest fare, with an appetite kept in order by temperance, affords a more delicious repast than the most luxurious meal without it.

As *temperance* relates chiefly to *eating*, *soberness* or *sobriety* relates properly to *drinking*. And here the same observations recur. The strictest, and perhaps the best rule, is merely to satisfy the end of drinking. But if a little more indulgence be taken, it ought to be taken with the greatest circumspection.

With regard to youth, indeed, I should be inclined to great strictness on this head. In eating, if they eat of proper and simple food they cannot easily err. Their growing limbs and strong exercise require larger supplies than full-grown bodies, which must be kept in order by a more rigid temperance. But if more indulgence be allowed them in eating, less, surely, should in drinking. With strong liquors of every kind they have nothing to do; and if they should totally abstain on this head it were the better. The languor which attends\* age

— Ubite

Accedant anni, et traxi mollius ztas

Imbecilla volet.—

Hor. Sat.

requires,

requires, *perhaps*, now and then some aids; but the spirits of youth want no recruits; a little rest is sufficient.

As to the bad consequences derived from excessive drinking, besides filling the blood with bloated and vicious humours, and debauching the purity of the mind, as in the case of intemperate eating, it is attended with this peculiar evil, the loss of our senses. Hence follow frequent inconveniences and mortifications. We expose our follies; we betray our secrets; we are often imposed upon; we quarrel with our friends; we lay ourselves open to our enemies; and, in short, make ourselves the objects of contempt and the topics of ridicule to all our acquaintance. Nor is it only the act of intoxication which deprives us of our reason during the prevalence of it; the habit of drunkenness soon besots and impairs the understanding, and renders us at all times less fit for the offices of life.

We are next enjoined to *keep our bodies in chastity*. *Flee youthful lusts*, says the Apostle, *which war against the soul*. And there is surely nothing which carries on a war against the soul more successfully. Wherever we have a catalogue in Scripture (and we have many such catalogues) of those sins which in a peculiar manner debauch

the mind, these *youthful lusts* have always, under some denomination, a place among them. To keep ourselves free from all contagion of this kind, let us endeavour to preserve a purity in our *thoughts, our words, and our actions.*

First, let us preserve a purity in our *thoughts.* These dark recesses, which the eye of the world cannot penetrate, are the grand receptacles of these *youthful lusts.* Here they find their first encouragement. The entrance of such impure ideas perhaps we cannot always prevent. We may always, however, prevent cherishing them: we may always prevent their making an impression upon us; the devil may be cast out as soon as discovered.

Let us always keep in mind, that even into these dark abodes the eye of Heaven can penetrate: that every thought of our hearts is open to that God before whom we must one day stand; and that, however secretly we may indulge these impure ideas, at the great day of account, they will certainly appear in an awful detail against us.

Let us remember again, that if our *bodies* be the *temples of the Holy Ghost*, our *minds* are the very *sanctuaries of these temples:* and if there be any weight in the Apostle's argument against polluting

our

our bodies, it urges with double force against polluting our minds.

But above all other considerations it behoves us most to keep our *thoughts* pure, because they are the fountains from which our *words* and *actions* flow. *Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.* Lewd expressions and actions are only bad thoughts matured, and spring as naturally from them as the plant from its seed. It is the same vicious depravity carried a step farther, and only shews a more confirmed and a more mischievous degree of guilt. While we keep our impurities in our thoughts they debauch only ourselves: bad enough it is true. But when we proceed to words and actions we let our impurities loose; we spread the contagion, and become the corrupters of others.

Let it be our first care, therefore, to keep our thoughts pure. If we do this, our words and actions will be pure of course. And that we may be the better enabled to do it, let us use such helps as reason and religion prescribe. Let us pray for God's holy assistance. Let us avoid all company and all books that have a tendency to corrupt our minds, and every thing that can inflame our passions. He who allows himself in these things holds a parley with vice, which

will

will infallibly debauch him in the end, if he do not take the alarm in time, and break off such dalliance.

One thing ought to be our particular care; and that is, never to be unemployed. Ingenious amusements are of great use in filling up the vacuities of our time. Idle we should never be. **A vacant mind is an invitation to vice.**

## LECTURE XX.

*Covetousness the source of wickedness and misery — a desiring frame of mind — covetousness consistent with prodigality — particularly to be restrained in youth — duties of each station — an active, useful life recommended — the proper motive to such a life.*

We are forbidden next to covet or desire other men's goods.

There are two great paths of vice into which bad men commonly strike; that of *unlawful pleasure*, and that of *unlawful gain*. The path of *unlawful pleasure* we have just examined, and have seen the danger of obeying the headstrong impulse of our appetites. We have considered also an immoderate *love of gain*, and have seen dishonesty and fraud in a variety of shapes. But we have yet viewed them only as they affect society. We have viewed only the outward action. The rule before us, *We must not covet nor desire other men's goods*, comes a step nearer home, and considers the motive which governs the action.

Covetousness, or the love of money, is called in Scripture *the root of all evil*: and it is called so

so for two reasons, because it makes us *wicked*, and because it makes us *miserable*.

First, it makes us *wicked*. When it once gets possession of the heart, it will let no good principle flourish near it. Most vices have their fits; and when the violence of the passion is spent, there is some interval of calm. The vicious appetite cannot always run riot. It is fatigued at least by its own impetuosity: and it is possible, that in this moment of tranquillity a whisper from virtue may be heard. But in avarice, there is rarely intermission. It hangs like a dead weight on the soul, always pulling it to earth. We might as well expect to see a plant grow on a flint, as a virtue in the heart of a miser.

It makes us *miserable* as well as wicked. The cares and the fears of avarice are proverbial; and it must needs be, that he who depends for happiness on what is liable to a thousand accidents, must of course feel as many distresses and disappointments. The religious man depends for happiness on something more permanent; and if his worldly affairs go ill, his great dependence is still left\*. But as wealth is the only god which the covetous man worships, (for

\* Szviat, atq. novos moveat fortuna tumultus;  
Quantum hinc imminet? Hor. Sat.

covetousness,

covetousness, we are told, is *idolatry*,) a disappointment here is a disappointment indeed. Be he ever so prosperous, his wealth cannot secure him against the evils of mortality; against that time when he must give up all he values; when his bargains of advantage will be over, and nothing left but tears and despair.

But even a desiring frame of mind, though it be not carried to such a length, is always productive of misery. It cannot be otherwise. While we suffer ourselves to be continually in quest of what we have not, it is impossible we should be happy with what we have. In a word, to *abridge* our wants as much as possible, not to *increase* them, is the truest happiness.

We are much mistaken, however, if we think the man who hoards up his money is the only covetous man. The prodigal, though his end be different, may be equally avaricious\*. The former denies himself every comfort; the latter grasps at every pleasure. Both characters are equally bad in different extremes. The miser is more detestable in the eyes of the world, because he enters into none of its joys: but it is a question, which is more wretched in himself or more pernicious to society.

\* *Alicui appetens, sui profus.*

*Sal. de Catil.*

As covetousness is esteemed the vice of age, every appearance of it among young persons ought particularly to be discouraged; because, if it get ground at this early period, nobody can tell how far it may afterwards proceed. And yet on the other side, there may be great danger in holding up the opposite extreme. As it is certainly right under proper restrictions, both to save money and to spend it, it would be highly useful to fix the due bounds on each side. But nothing is more difficult than to raise these limits between extremes. Every man's case, in a thousand circumstances, differs from his neighbour's: and as no rule can be fixed for all, every man, of course, in these disquisitions, must be left to his own conscience. We are all, indeed, very ready to give our opinions how others ought to act. We can adjust with great nicety what is proper for them to do, and point out their mistakes with much precision: while nothing is necessary to us but to act as properly as we can ourselves, observing as just a mean as possible between prodigality and avarice; and applying in all our difficulties to the word of God, where these great land-marks of morality are the most accurately fixed.

We

We have now taken a view of what is prohibited in our commerce with mankind; let us next see what is enjoined. We are still proceeding with those duties which we owe to ourselves. Instead of spending our fortune, therefore, in *unlawful pleasure*, or increasing it by *unlawful gain*, we are required to *learn and labour truly* (that is honestly) to *get our own living, and to do our duty in that state of life unto which it shall please God to call us*. These words will be sufficiently explained by considering, first, that we all have *some* station in life, some particular duties to discharge: and, secondly, in what *manner* we ought to discharge them.

First, that man was not born to be idle may be inferred from the active spirit that appears in every part of nature. Every thing is alive; every thing contributes to the general good; even the very inanimate parts of the creation, plants, stones, metals, cannot be called totally inactive, but bear their part likewise in the general usefulness. If, then, every part, even of inanimate nature, be thus employed, surely we cannot suppose it was the intention of the great Creator, that man, who is the most capable of employing himself properly, should be the only creature without employment.

Again,

Again, that man was born for active life is plain from the necessity of labour. If it had not been necessary God would not originally have imposed it. But without it the body would become enervated and the mind corrupted. Idleness, therefore, is justly esteemed the origin, both of disease and vice. So that if labour and employment, either of body or mind, had no use but what respected ourselves they would be highly proper: but they have farther use.

The necessity of them is plain from the want that all men have of the assistance of others. If so, this assistance should be mutual; every man should contribute his part. We have already seen, that it is proper there should be different stations in the world; that some should be placed high in life and others low. The lowest, we know, cannot be exempt from labour, and the highest ought not; though their labour, according to their station, will be of a different kind. Some, we see, *must labour* (as the catechism phrases it) *to get their own living*; and others should *do their duty in that state of life unto which it hath pleased God to call them*. God distributes, we read, various talents among men: to some he gives ten talents, to others five, and to others one. But it is expected, we find, notwithstanding this inequality, that each should employ the

talent that is given to the best advantage; and he who received ten talents was under the same obligation of improving them, as he who had received only one; and would, if he had hid his talents in the earth, have been punished in proportion to the abuse. Every man, even in the highest station, may find a proper employment both for his time and fortune if he please: and he may assure himself, that God, by placing him in that station, never meant to exempt him from the common obligations of society, and give him a licence to spend his life in ease and pleasure. God meant assuredly that he should bear his part in the general commerce of life; that he should consider himself not as an individual but as a member of the community, the interests of which he is under an obligation to support with all his power; and that his elevated station gives him no other pre-eminence than that of being more extensively useful.

Having thus seen that we have all *some* station in life to support, some particular duties to discharge: let us now see in what *manner* we ought to discharge them.

We have a plain rule given us in Scripture on this head; that all our duties in life should be performed *as to the Lord, but not unto man:*

that

that is, we should consider our stations in life as trusts reposed in us by our Creator, and as such should discharge the duties of them. What, though no worldly trust be reposed? What, though we are accountable to nobody on earth? Can we therefore suppose ourselves *in reality less accountable*? Can we suppose that God, for no reason that we can divine, has singled us out, and given us a large proportion of the things of this world, (while others around us are in need,) for no other purpose than to squander it away upon ourselves? To God undoubtedly we are accountable for every blessing we enjoy.

It matters not whether these advantages be inherited or acquired; still they are the gift of God. Agreeably to their rank in life, it is true, all men should live: human distinctions require it; and in doing this *properly* every one around will be benefited. Utility, indeed, should be considered in all our expences. Even the very amusements of a man of fortune should be founded in it.

In short, it is the constant injunction of Scripture, in whatever station we are placed, to consider ourselves as *God's servants*, and as acting immediately under his eye, not expecting our

our reward among men; but from our great Master who is in Heaven. This sanctifies in a manner all our actions; it places the little difficulties of our station in the light of God's appointments, and turns the commonest duties of life into acts of religion.

## LECTURE XXI.

*Bad company—meaning of the phrase—different classes of bad company—ill-chosen company—what is meant by keeping bad company—the danger of it from our aptness to imitate and catch the manners of others—from the great power and force of custom—from our own bad inclinations.*

WE have now gone through our duty to God, our neighbour, and ourselves, and should proceed, in the order pointed out in the catechism, to consider the Lord's Prayer: but it will not, perhaps, be amiss to step a little aside, and but a little, for the sake of one lesson on a subject, which to youth is very important, and without which instruction is of little use: the lesson I mean respects the danger of keeping *bad company*.

*Evil communication, says the text, corrupts good manners.* The assertion is general; and no doubt all people suffer from such communication; but above all, the minds of youth will suffer, which are yet unformed, unprincipled, unfurnished, and ready to receive any impression. But before we consider the danger of keeping bad company, let us first see the meaning of the phrase.

In

In the phrase of the world *good company* means fashionable people. Their stations in life, not their morals are considered; and he who associates with such, though they set him the example of breaking every commandment of the decalogue, is still said to *keep good company*. I should wish you to fix another meaning to the expression; and to consider vice in the same detestable light in whatever company it is found; nay, to consider all company in which it is found, be their station what it will, as bad company.

The three following classes will perhaps include the greatest part of those who deserve this appellation.

The first class may contain all who endeavour to destroy the principles of Christianity; who jest on Scripture; talk blasphemy; and treat revelation with contempt.

A second class are those who have a tendency to destroy in us the principles of common honesty and integrity. Under this head we may rank gamesters of every denomination, and the low and infamous characters of every profession.

A third class, and such as are commonly most dangerous to youth, includes the long catalogue of men of pleasure. In whatever way they follow the call of appetite they have a tendency to corrupt the purity of the mind.

Besides these three classes, whom we may call *bad company*, there are others who come under the denomination of *ill-chosen company*; trifling, insipid characters of every kind, who have no employment, are led by no ideas of improvement, but spend their time in dissipation and folly, whose highest praise it is that they are only not vicious. With none of these a serious man would wish his son to keep company.

It may be asked, What is meant by *keeping company*? The world abounds with bad characters: they meet us in every place; and if we keep company at all, it is impossible to avoid keeping company with such persons.

It is true, if we were determined never to have any commerce with bad men, we must, as the apostle remarks, *altogether go out of the world*. By *keeping bad company*, therefore, is not meant a casual intercourse with them on occasion of business, or as they accidentally fall in our way, but having an inclination to consort with them; complying with that inclination; seeking their company when we might avoid it; entering into their parties; and making them the companions of our choice. Mixing with them *occasionally* cannot be avoided.

The danger of keeping bad company arises principally from our aptness to imitate and catch the

the manners and sentiments of others; from the power of custom; from our own bad inclinations; and from the pains taken by the bad to corrupt us\*.

In our earliest youth the contagion of manners is observable. In the boy, yet incapable of having any thing instilled into him, we easily discover from his first actions and rude attempts at language, the kind of persons with whom he has been brought up: we see the early spring of a civilized education, or the first wild shoots of rusticity.

As he enters farther into life, his behaviour, manners, and conversation, all take their cast from the company he keeps. Observe the peasant and the man of education: the difference is striking. And yet God hath bestowed equal talents on each. The only difference is, they have been thrown into different scenes of life, and have had commerce with persons of different stations.

Nor are *manners* and *behaviour* more easily caught than *opinions* and *principles*. In childhood and youth we naturally adopt the sentiments of those about us. As we advance in life, how few

\* See this subject treated more at large in an anonymous pamphlet, on the Employment of Time.

of us think for ourselves? How many of us are satisfied with taking our opinions at second hand?

The *force of custom* forms another argument against keeping bad company. However seriously disposed we may be, and however shocked at the first approaches of vice, this shocking appearance goes off on an intimacy with it. Custom will soon render the most disgusting thing familiar. And this is indeed a kind provision of nature to render labour, and toil, and danger, which are the lot of man, more easy to him. The raw soldier, who trembles at the first encounter, becomes a hardy veteran in a few campaigns. Habit renders danger familiar, and of course indifferent to him.

But habit, which is intended for our good, may, like other kind appointments of nature, be converted into a mischief. The well-disposed youth, entering first into bad company, is shocked at what he hears and what he sees. The good principles which he had imbibed are an alarming lesson against the wickedness of his companions. But alas! this sensibility is but of a day's continuance. The next jovial meeting makes the horrid picture of yesterday more easily endured.

Virtue

Virtue is soon thought a severe rule; the Gospel, an inconvenient restraint: a few pangs of conscience now and then interrupt his pleasure, and whisper to him, that he once had better thoughts: but even these by degrees die away; and he who at first was shocked even at the appearance of vice, is formed by custom into a profligate leader of vicious pleasures. So carefully should we oppose the first approaches of sin! so vigilant should we be against so insidious an enemy!

*Our own bad inclinations* form another argument against bad company. We have so many passions and appetites to govern, so many bad propensities of different kinds to watch, that, amidst such a variety of enemies *within*, we ought at least to be on our guard against those *without*. The breast even of a good man is represented in Scripture, and experienced in fact, to be in a state of warfare. His vicious inclinations are continually drawing him one way, while his virtue is making efforts another. And if the Scriptures represent this as the case even of a good man, whose passions, it may be imagined, are become in some degree cool and temperate, and who has made some progress in a virtuous course, what may we suppose to be the danger

of a raw unexperienced youth, whose passions and appetites are violent and seducing, and whose mind, at best, is in a wavering state? It is *his* part surely to keep out of the way of temptation, and to give his bad inclinations as little room as possible to acquire new strength.

ons  
and  
It  
of  
as

## LECTURE XXII.

*Ridicule one of the chief arts of corruption—bad company injures our characters as well as manners—presumption the forerunner of ruin—the advantages of good company equal to the disadvantages of bad—cautions in forming intimacies.*

THESE arguments against keeping bad company will still receive additional strength, if we consider farther *the great pains taken by the bad to corrupt others*. It is an undoubted, but a lamentable fact in the history of human nature, that bad men take more pains to corrupt, than virtuous men do to reform. Hence those specious arts, that show of friendship, that appearance of disinterestedness, with which the profligate seducer endeavours to lure the unwary youth, and, yielding to his inclinations, seems to follow rather than to lead. Many are the arts of these corrupters, but their principal art is ridicule: by this they endeavour to laugh out of countenance all the better principles of their wavering proselyte, and make him think contemptibly of those whom he formerly respected; by this they stifle the ingenuous blush,

and finally destroy all sense of shame. Their cause is below argument; they aim not therefore at reasoning; raillery is the weapon they employ; and who is there that hath the steadiness to hear persons and things, whatever reverence he may have had for them, the subject of continual ridicule, without losing that reverence by degrees?

Having thus considered what principally makes bad company dangerous, I shall just add, that even were your *morals* in no danger from such intercourse, your *characters* would infallibly suffer. The world will always judge of you by your companions; and nobody will suppose that a youth of virtuous principles himself can possibly form a connection with a profligate.

In reply to the danger supposed to arise from bad company, perhaps the youth may say, he is so firm in his own opinions, so steady in his principles, that he thinks himself secure, and need not restrain himself from the most unreserved conversation.

Alas! this security is the very edge of the precipice; nor hath vice in her whole train a more

dangerous enemy to you than presumption. Caution, ever awake to danger, is a guard against it; but security lays every guard asleep. *Let him who thinketh be standeth, saith the apostle, take heed lest he fall.* Even an apostle himself did fall, by thinking that he stood secure: *Though I should die with thee, said St. Peter to his Master, yet will I not deny thee.* That very night, notwithstanding this boasted security, he repeated the crime three several times. And can we suppose that presumption, which occasioned an apostle's fall, shall not ruin an unexperienced youth? The story is recorded for our instruction, and should be a standing lesson against presuming on our own strength.

In conclusion; such as the dangers are which arise from *bad company*, such are the advantages which accrue from *good*. We imitate and catch the manners and sentiments of good men, as we do of bad. Custom, which renders vice less a deformity, renders virtue more lovely. Good examples have a force beyond instruction, and warm us into emulation beyond precept; while the countenance and conversation of virtuous men encourage and draw out into action every kindred disposition of our hearts.

Besides, as a sense of shame often prevents our doing a right thing in bad company, it operates in the same way in preventing our doing a wrong one in good. Our character becomes a pledge, we cannot without a kind of dishonour draw back.

It is not possible indeed for a youth yet unfurnished with knowledge (which fits him for good company) to choose his companions as he pleases. A youth must have something peculiarly attractive to qualify him for the acquaintance of men of established reputation. What he has to do is at all events to avoid bad company, and to endeavour, by improving his mind and morals, to qualify himself for the best.

Happy is that youth who, on his entrance into the world, can choose his company with discretion. There is often in vice a gaiety, an unreserve, a freedom of manners, which are apt at first to engage the unwary; while virtue, on the other hand, is often modest, reserved, diffident, backward, and easily disconcerted. That freedom of manners, however engaging, may cover a very corrupt heart; and this awkwardness, however unpleasing, may veil a thousand virtues. Suffer not your mind therefore to be easily engaged or disgusted

disgusted at first. Form your intimacies with reserve; and if drawn unawares into an acquaintance you disapprove, immediately retreat. Open not your heart to every profession of friendship: they whose friendship is worth accepting are, as you ought to be, reserved in offering it. Choose your companions not merely for the sake of a few outward accomplishments, for the idle pleasure of spending an agreeable hour; but mark their disposition to virtue or vice, and, as much as possible, choose those for your companions whom you see generally respected; always remembering, that upon the choice of your company depends in a great measure the success of all you have learned, the hopes of your friends, your future characters in life, and, what you ought above all other things to value, the purity of your hearts.

## LECTURE XXIII.

*Of prayer in general—its first object is praise—a second, to solicit the pardon for sin—a third, to beg a supply of our wants—one of the advantages of prayer, to preserve in our minds a sense of God, and of our dependance upon him—together with a sense of our duty; to which it contributes not only in a natural, but in a spiritual way—the qualifications of prayer considered—faith—humility—sincerity—resolutions of amendment—charity—to be offered through the merits of Christ—ejaculations of praise—petition—objections answered—praise, an absurd homage—absurd to inform God of our wants—or to attempt by our prayers to alter a stated course of things.*

BEFORE we enter on the Lord's prayer, which falls next under our examination, it may be proper to consider *prayer in general*—the object—the advantages—and the qualifications of it; together with some of the most popular objections which are made to it.

When we consider the infinite distance between God and man—between that Being whom the Heaven of Heavens cannot contain, and man, with

with all the weaknesses of mortality about him ; it may at first appear matter of astonishment that we are allowed any communication with so great a Being. The distinctions which worldly policy and worldly pride make among mankind, among creatures of the same rank, cannot but raise our ideas still higher of the goodness of God ! When we see man treating his fellow with pride and contempt, on the vile distinctions of station, family, and fortune,—what a lesson to us is the goodness of God ! Merciful, mild, and condescending to our weaknesses, he listens to, and grants the petitions of his meanest creatures.

The first great object of prayer is the *praise of God*. The works of creation naturally raise it ; and the goodness of God in continuing to us that being which we cannot ourselves preserve, and those comforts which we cannot ourselves procure, brings it home to our feelings. It is a duty which every rational creature owes to his Creator. It is a source too of our happiness : simple praise, which consists merely in extolling excellence, is a pleasing theme ; but when it is excited by gratitude, it flows with still greater pleasure. Gratitude

titude has a tendency to improve that happy disposition of mind, which *feels* every enjoyment that it *possesses*.

A second object of prayer is to solicit *the pardon of our sins*, God not only permits, but even enjoins us to do it; and he has appointed penitent prayer as one of the means of obtaining pardon. It must ever be accompanied by confession, as confessing a fault is one of the first steps towards amending it. In this humiliating employment we have not only to deplore our own sinfulness, but the lost condition of human nature; without being truly sensible of this, we can neither *acknowledge* the means which God hath used to obviate it, nor be *grateful* for them.

After thanking God for his past goodness, and endeavouring to make ourselves as worthy as we can of future favours, it is the next object of prayer to petition a *supply of our wants*. Among them the principal is, that of the assistance of God's Holy Spirit. It is the constant doctrine of Scripture, that however necessary our own endeavours are to make us virtuous, they are not sufficient

sufficient alone to do it: our own feelings and imperfections in a thousand instances must convince us this is the case. To counteract the depravity of nature, God hath promised us the divine assistance of his Holy Spirit, and earnest prayer is the mean he hath appointed for the attainment of this end.

We are permitted also to pray for our *temporal wants*. This is indeed the nicest and most delicate part of prayer. Too thankful for past mercies we cannot be; too earnest in soliciting the pardon of our sins, and God's spiritual assistance, we cannot be; but so short-sighted are we, that in begging a supply of our temporal wants, we may easily err. But on these heads we shall see more in the explanation of the Lord's prayer.

Besides praising God for his mercies, asking pardon for our sins, and begging a supply of our wants, which are the primary objects of prayer, there are other great advantages which are closely connected with it.

Of these the first is, to preserve in our minds a sense of God, and of our dependance on him.

When

When we praise God, we are naturally impressed with an idea of his perfections; and when we beg the forgiveness of our sins, and a supply of our wants, we are as naturally reminded that we are weak and sinful creatures, that we are continually under the eye of an all-powerful Being, and are in hourly need of his protection and favour. And if our prayers be constant, uniform, and fervent, these great truths will be impressed upon our minds, and become the leading principles of our lives.

Prayer is also calculated to impress us with a sense of our duty, and to keep us steady in the practice of it. A virtuous wish is a step towards virtue; a fervent prayer is still a nearer advance. To pray ardently for an increase of virtue, even in a natural way, must increase it; and to pray frequently must tend to preserve it. Indeed, in the whole circle of Christian duties, perhaps there is not one which has a greater effect in forming the heart than rational devotion.

After the advantages of prayer, let us consider the *qualifications* of it; or what circumstances are necessary to make it an acceptable service to God. It should be founded in faith, and accompanied with

with humility, sincerity, resolutions of amendment, and charity. It should also be offered up in the name and through the merits of Christ.

It should first be founded in *faith*. It is obvious to common sense, that *he who cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them who diligently seek him*; otherwise, why should we seek him at all? We ought therefore to trust his promises, and put up our prayers in the full assurance of being heard. Even men, when their word is plighted, expect this confidence; and shall we approach God with less confidence than we do man?

Secondly, our prayers must be accompanied with *humility*. Humility is expected even when we ask a favour of our fellow-creatures. What humiliation then is due to God, from whom we have every thing to ask, and before whom we have not the smallest merits to plead? An humble heart in itself is a pleasing sacrifice to God. The humility of the publican was half his prayer.

They should be accompanied also with *sincerity*. Mere lip-service can never please God; it is a mockery of him. Indeed if our minds are thoroughly impressed with a sense of God's power and goodness, and of our own weakness and dependance,

dependance, our prayers will of course be sincere, we shall find it less difficult to check the idle wanderings of our thoughts, we shall confess our sins with an heart-felt contrition, and praise God with unsigned thankfulness.

But sincere prayer is of little value in the sight of God, if it be not accompanied with steady *resolutions of amendment*. If the heart be not improved, devotion is dead, its fruits are lost. To implore pardon for our sins, and not endeavour to avoid them, is shewing ourselves to be just so much in earnest as to own we are in the wrong, without attempting to get right.

One thing more is necessary to make our devotions acceptable to God—they should be offered up in the spirit of charity. He who begs forgiveness at God's hands in an unforgiving temper, may as well omit his prayers: he had better omit them; to his uncharitable temper he only adds a new offence—that of an unworthy prayer. It is the constant language of Scripture, that *with the same measure with which we mete, it shall be measured to us again. Give, and it shall be given unto you. Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven.*

But no human qualifications alone can carry our prayers to the throne of grace; we must have other merits besides our own, to make them acceptable

acceptable in the sight of God—the all-sufficient merits of our Blessed Redeemer; he is the great mediator between God and man. A holy life makes his merits ours. All our prayers therefore should be offered up in his name, and through his most powerful mediation.

But in the Lord's prayer, no mention is made of the merits of Christ?

It is true, nor could there: when that prayer was composed, the great atonement was not made; how could it then be pleaded? But we are told, it ought to be pleaded as soon as it should be made. *Hitherto*, said our Saviour to his disciples a little before his passion, *have ye asked nothing in my name; but whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you.*

When all these qualifications are united; when our prayers are founded in *faith*; when they are accompanied with *humility, sincerity, resolutions of amendment, and charity*; and, lastly, when they are offered up in the *name* and through the *merits of Christ*, we may assure ourselves they will be acceptable in the sight of God.

I shall just add on this subject, that besides *formal prayers*, either public or private, a devout

mind will find many opportunities of exercising itself, in the midst even of business and pleasure. An *ejaculation* of praise, a single petition raised from the heart, in one devout thought unaccompanied by any external act, will unquestionably find its way to heaven. This is literally *having God in all our thoughts*, and making our lives a continual prayer.

As reasonable a duty however as prayer is, objections have been made to it.

Praise, it hath been said, is an absurd homage; as if the Almighty Father could be pleased with the empty praises of a poor insignificant race of creatures. We are to do all, it seems, to the glory of God. What glory can God receive from our doings? Doth his glory in any respect depend upon the breath of man?

To this objection we answer, that if the real exaltation of God's glory, or if any addition to his happiness, be supposed to be the intention of praise, the idea indeed were very absurd; but certainly with regard to man, no employment can be more adapted to his nature, or in itself more rational, than to praise his Creator. It reminds him of all those great attributes, which, as he

praises

praises them, he learns to imitate ; it reminds him of that infinite wisdom and power on which he ought always to depend ; it reminds him of that tenderness and indulgence which he has so often experienced, and which he ought ever to praise. When we are ordered therefore to do every thing for the glory of God, the expression is merely adapted to common acceptation, and alludes to the glory of earthly princes, which good subjects advance by obeying the laws. The highest glory therefore, according to our ideas, which God can receive from his creatures, arises from their obedience to his commands.

But it is absurd, replies the objector, to inform God of our wants ; nay, such information amounts almost to a denial of his omniscience.

Undoubtedly, if it were the intention of the petitioner to *inform God* ; but this never enters into the idea of a prayer. God hath enjoined us to pray for a supply of our wants, as a mean of receiving it. In what manner prayer is efficacious to this purpose, is not for us to inquire. One thing is very obvious ; that dependant creatures ought always to be reminded of their dependant state, and of that Being from whose bounty

bounty they receive every thing they enjoy; and nothing surely can be better calculated than prayer to promote this wise end.

But is not prayer an absurd attempt to alter the stated course of things? And is it not high presumption to imagine, that God will alter it for the sake of our petitions?

The objection is founded in ignorance. Do we know what *is the stated course of things*? Do we know whether there even exists what the objector calls *a stated course*? Or whether God may not reserve all events, as far as free agents are concerned, in a mutable condition, dependant on circumstances? In whatever way our prayers are efficacious, it is not our part to inquire. We have the Almighty's express command for this intercourse with him, and therefore we ought with thankfulness to comply. He who gave the command, knows best how to make the compliance with it effectual.

## LECTURE XXIV.

*Occasion on which the Lord's prayer was composed—general idea of it—division into five parts—the first contains an address of praise—explanation of the word Father when applied to God—of the word heaven.—The second part contains a petition for the general good of mankind—meaning of hallowing God's name—thy kingdom come—thy will be done.*

**H**AVING thus considered prayer in general, let us now consider the Lord's prayer.

This prayer was composed by our Saviour on a request which his disciples made him, to teach them to pray as John taught his disciples. Much of the substance of it is supposed to have been taken from Jewish forms then in use, which our Saviour, as it appears, selecting, adapted to his own purpose. This mode of composing a prayer was agreeable to his usual practice; which was to give as little offence as possible to the prejudices of men. In forming a prayer, therefore, he chose rather to take in part what he found already established than to compose one entirely anew.

This prayer seems intended both as a *form* and as a *model*. We have the great lines of rational devotion marked out; to which we may adapt our own exigences. This is implied in the introduction, *After this manner pray ye*: as if our Saviour had said, the precise form of words here given needs not always be adhered to; but let it be your general direction.

The Lord's prayer seems to admit an easy division into five parts.

The first contains an invocation of praise: *Our Father, which art in Heaven.*

The second contains a petition for the general good of mankind: *Hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.*

The third part contains a petition for temporal blessings: *Give us this day our daily bread.*

The fourth, for spiritual: *And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

The fifth concludes with a profession of our faith: *For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.*

## P A R T I.

**T**HE first part contains an invocation of praise:  
*Our Father which art in Heaven.*

The Jews, as far as appears, were not allowed the use of this address to God; at least, they had no idea of it in a *christian sense*. They were taught rather to address the Deity by some such awful title, as the *Lord Jehovah*, the *Lord of hosts*, or *the Lord who taketh vengeance*. His *power*, rather than his *goodness*, was the leading character under which they generally acknowledged him. But the *christian dispensation* allows us the use of the tender name of *Father*. *We have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry Abba, Father. The spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit that we are the children of God; and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ.* Under the gracious appellation of *Father* we not only acknowledge God as the creator and preserver of the world, but hope from him, as a child from his parent, the supply of our wants, assistance in our difficulties, indulgence to our failings, and pardon for our faults; and these kindnesses, in a degree, proportioned to his wisdom, goodness, and power.

By the word *heaven*, the Jewish language frequently understands pre-eminence. A *city exalted to heaven*, means only a 'city raised to an extraordinary height of power. When we address God therefore in *heaven*, we are not taught to conceive him as stationed in any particular part of his creation. God is present, we know, on earth as well as in heaven; *everywhere* as well as *anywhere*. When we address ourselves, therefore, to God in *heaven*, we mean only to address ourselves to that God who is omnipotent and supreme.

## PART II.

AFTER the invocation the prayer begins in the spirit of christian benevolence, with a petition for the general good of mankind: *Hallowed be thy name; thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it in heaven.*

God's name is *hallowed*, or religiously honoured, when his creatures have just sentiments of him. When we pray, therefore, that God's name may be *hallowed*, we pray that mankind may have their minds impressed with just ideas of his wisdom, power, justice, and other attributes. In a word, we pray that all mankind may love and

and fear him as their great benefactor and judge; and that in the Scripture language *they may sanctify the Lord God in their hearts.*

We farther pray, that mankind may not only have just sentiments of God, but may be partakers also with us in the purity of religion: *Thy kingdom come.*

By *kingdom*, in the New Testament, or the *kingdom of heaven*, is generally meant the christian religion. When John the Baptist preached, saying, *the kingdom of heaven is at hand*, he meant the Gospel or the christian religion is about to be established. When we pray, therefore, that *God's kingdom may come*, we pray that the christian religion in its full purity and perfection may be established throughout the world, as what must be most conducive to the happiness of it. This is yet we see far from being the case. Great part of the world never heard of Christianity. Great part of it, though they have heard of Christ, yet acknowledge him not. A large portion even of the christian world debase Christianity almost into heathenism; and great numbers, even where we suppose Christianity purely professed, deny the power of it, by leading wicked lives. Great reason, therefore, have we to pray, that *God's kingdom may come*. We have ground to hope, from many parts of the prophetic writings,

writings, that at length the kingdom of Christ shall be established in its full extent; for which event we devoutly pray: *when the day-star shall arise to all the world, and the people, which sit in darkness, shall see a great light; when the whole race of mankind shall join in the Psalmist's triumphant song, the Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice; yea, the multitude of the isles shall be glad thereof.*

In consequence of mankind's having just notions of God, and a true religion to direct them, we pray that their lives may be answerable to such advantages; and that God may be obeyed on earth, as far as human frailty will permit, as he is by the angels in heaven: *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven.* Angelic obedience we conceive to be perfect; human obedience we know is very defective. Lifeless and inanimate in our devotions, negligent at best in our practice, our most plausible actions springing often from unworthy motives, great reason have we to pray, that we and all mankind may give the best proof of our religious principles, by imitating the prompt obedience of angels, and *doing God's will on earth as it is done in heaven.*

## LECTURE XXV.

*The third part contains a prayer for the supply of our wants—first of a temporal kind—the necessaries of life are all we are allowed to pray for.—The fourth part contains a prayer for the supply of our spiritual wants—the forgiveness of our sins—and the assistance of God's Holy Spirit—the phrase “lead us not into temptation” considered.—The fifth part contains an acknowledgment of God's power, and our gratitude.—A paraphrase of the whole.*

## PART III.

AFTER praying for the general good of mankind, we are instructed to pray for the supply of our wants. These are of two kinds, *temporal* and *spiritual*.

And first, we are allowed to pray for temporal things. *Give us this day our daily bread*, is an expression which cannot possibly, by any mode of interpretation, extend to more than the *necessaries of life*. It is a common analogy in language, to make some principal thing stand for many of the same kind. Thus the word *faith* often stands for the *whole of religion*, though it is only a part.

And thus the word *bread*, in the passage before us, stands for all the *necessaries of life* of which it is the principal. We are allowed then to pray for the necessities of life, but not for the superfluities of it. We must pray in general terms, and with extreme submission. For spiritual things we are more at liberty; because here we cannot err: but with regard to *temporal things*, so circumscribed is all our knowledge, that if we exceed we may run into error, and in a thousand instances ask things which may prove our ruin. The Apostle warns us against those *who ask amiss*, *that they may consume it upon their lusts*.

There is something singular in the repetition of the words, *this day* and *daily*; as if human nature, so apt to err on this subject, were *doubly* cautioned not to be solicitous to lay up a great store for the future, but to be satisfied with a moderate provision; and that we should not seem to form in our hearts that wicked wish of placing ourselves in a state independent of God. *Thou fool, this night shall thy soul be required of thee*, is a dreadful sentence upon record against such folly.

## P A R T IV.

WITH regard to our *spiritual* requests, we have two things to pray for; that God would pardon our sins, and assist us in avoiding sin for the future. Both these requests are contained in the following words: *Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us; and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.*

First then, we are to beg of God forgiveness of our past sins; and a Christian knows on what conditions only they will be forgiven. Without a thorough repentance of them, such a repentance as ends in a reformation both of heart and life, we know it is in vain to expect forgiveness.

Something more also is required. We are instructed to approach the throne of God in a forgiving temper towards others when we petition forgiveness for ourselves: agreeably to those passages of Scripture, in which we are told, that *unless we forgive others, our heavenly Father will not forgive us*; and that, *when we come to the altar, and there remember that we are at enmity with our neighbour, we must first be reconciled to him before we presume to offer our gift*; that is, before we make our supplication to God.

The forgiveness of others, therefore, though not the absolute condition of our own forgiveness, is however a necessary qualification. Though alone it cannot obtain our pardon; yet at the same time our pardon cannot be obtained without it.

Having thus prayed, that God would forgive our past sins, we next beg his assistance in avoiding sin for the future. It hath already been observed, that in this prayer no mention is made of the merits of Christ, as the great atonement was not then offered. We may observe also, that no mention is made of the Holy Spirit of God, which was not then promised. And yet, even then, we see men were ordered to pray for the assistance of God, to lead them out of temptation, and deliver them from evil. In what way God assisted his faithful servants under the old dispensation, or how that mode of divine assistance differed from the assistance now offered us under the dispensation of grace, is a question of very little importance. Certain it is, that God always did assist his servants; and never left himself without a witness of his goodness in the moral as well as in the natural world. But though this prayer was composed before the Spirit of Truth was promised, and when man of course could not use the petition for God's assistance in that sense in which it was afterwards used;

used by Christians; yet the christian sense ought certainly to be the sense in which it should now be used. When we pray therefore for God's assistance to *deliver us from evil*, we pray for it in that way in which God hath graciously promised it in the **Gospel**; that is, *through his Holy Spirit*.

The mode of expression is rather singular in the phrase, *Lead us not into temptation*. It immediately occurs, how can God lead us into temptation? *God*, St. James tells us, *tempteth no man*.

But the phrase, according to the Jewish idiom, means only, that God would lead us *out* of temptation; that he would not suffer us, in the Scripture-language, to be *tempted above our strength*; but that he would, *with the temptation*, *make a way to escape*. The purport of the petition, therefore, is, that he would graciously conduct us through all the moral difficulties of this life; and that finally, after we have passed our pilgrimage here upon earth, he would take us to himself, safe from all our dangers, and grant us peace in a happy immortality.

Surrounded by dangers and difficulties of every kind, great reason have we for these petitions. Every object around us, every period of age, every station of life, every temper of mind; our passions, our appetites, our imagination, our very reason; all

conspire in furnishing abundant matter either to mislead or to seduce us. The poor are tempted to dishonesty, and to repine at God; the rich are tempted by wantonness to forget him. The life of business and the life of leisure abound equally with temptations. The man of commerce with the world finds them in company; the recluse, in solitude. Thus surrounded by temptations, human power is insufficient to carry us safely through them. To heaven, therefore, we must pray for assistance. *With God all things are possible.* His power co-operating with our endeavours will enable us to meet our adversary on superior ground. *It can lead us out of temptation, and deliver us from evil.*

## P A R T V.

HAVING thus put up our petitions to God, we conclude with an *assurance of our firmest confidence in him.* Faith, we know, is one of the first requisites of prayer. If we do not believe that God is able to grant our petitions, it is idle to make them. We pray therefore to God, because *his is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever and ever.* He is the supreme disposer of all events; and his power, like his goodness, is above

above conception. We have the firmest confidence, therefore, that he is both *able* and willing to grant all our *reasonable* petitions.

THE whole prayer then, according to this explanation, may be thus paraphrased :

O thou beneficent Being, our Creator, Preserver, and Father, have mercy upon the whole race of mankind! May we all have just sentiments of Thee! May thy true religion be established throughout the whole world; and may men feel its influence, live suitably to its precepts, and imitate, in their obedience, the blessed spirits of heaven! Grant us such a share of this world's good as thou seest most proper for us. We ask not for wealth or power. Grant us the necessities of life; the rest we submit to Thee: and may we never, through the influence of the world, forget our dependance upon Thee! Grant, O Lord, that we may make ourselves proper objects of thy mercy and forgiveness. May we have a thorough sense of our own unworthiness; and may that lead us to contrition, penitence, and steady resolutions of amendment! And may we never presume to ask thy forgiveness in an unfor-giving temper! Amidst all the temptations and difficulties of this world, be thou present with us.

Let

Let us not be tempted above our strength ; but let thy gracious Spirit always conduct us. May we use our own best endeavours in resisting the temptations of the world ; and may thy gracious aid render those endeavours successful ! So that, having finished our course, we may, after this state of trial upon earth, be received into the eternal mansions of thy heavenly kingdom ! Hear our petitions, O Lord, which are put up in the fullest confidence and faith in thee. We acknowledge thy power, and trust in thy goodness for a proper supply of all our wants.

## LECTURE XXVI.

*Nature of positive duties—definition of a sacrament—its original meaning—the several parts of the definition explained—sacrament of baptism—significance of water as a sign—baptism of infants.*

We have now considered the great duties of faith and obedience; in which consists the sum of religion. These we commonly call *morally right*, or right in their own nature.

Besides these, there is another species of duties which are called *positive*. In their own nature they are indifferent, but are rendered binding, because appointed by divine authority.

The Jews were burdened with a heavy load of these positive duties. One may almost say, the spirit of the Mosaic law, peculiar to the circumstances of the Jewish people, consisted in them. In ceremonies also consisted entirely the religion of the heathen. All they knew, indeed, of religion was a burthensome ritual, made up of *external acts*, which had no reference to *life* and *manners*.

Never was any system of religion so free from the burden of ceremonies as Christianity: never was.

was any religion so purely addressed to the heart. The two sacraments, of *baptism* and the *Lord's supper*, are the only ceremonies ordained by Christ; both certainly very apposite—*baptism*, as an *outward testimony* of our *entrance into the christian religion*; and the *Lord's supper*, as an *outward testimony* of our *continuance in it*. The former of course is administered only *once*; the latter, *frequently*.

The short account of the sacraments contained in the catechism considers three points: the nature of a sacrament in general; the nature of the sacrament of baptism; and the nature of the *Lord's supper*.

With regard to the nature of a sacrament in general, it is first asked, *How many sacraments Christ hath ordained?*

The answer is, *Two only, as generally necessary to salvation; viz. baptism, and the supper of the Lord.*

This question points chiefly at the papists, who hold seven sacraments: baptism, the *Lord's supper*, confirmation, matrimony, penance, orders, and extreme unction. Now as the word *sacrament* is nowhere defined in Scripture, we have no objection to a dozen sacraments, instead of seven,

seven, if the papists choose it: all we contend for is, that none of them should be placed on an equal footing with baptism and the Lord's supper; which, according to our definition of a sacrament, are the only two that are *ordained by Christ*.

The word *sacrament* originally implied the oath which soldiers took to their leader; and under this idea it was first adopted into the language of religion. But its meaning, in the earlier ages, was very indefinite: and we find it used among the writers of the first centuries to express any thing *mysterious* in religion. By degrees it obtained a closer acceptation; and among Protestants was at length confined merely to baptism and the Lord's supper. However still, unfortunately, the old idea of a *mystery* in some degree cleaves to it, and has been of prejudice to one of these rites especially, which in itself seems to be as simple as the other.

We define a sacrament to be *an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace, ordained by Christ himself as a mean, whereby we receive the same, and a pledge to assure us thereof*.

In a sacrament, there must first be *an outward visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace*; that is, a sensible representation of the benefit received.

A sacra-

A sacrament must, secondly, be distinguished from other ceremonies, as being *ordained by Christ*. Common ceremonies the church may decree and abrogate at pleasure. They are useful merely for the sake of order; and under different circumstances different ceremonies take place. But a sacrament, as *ordained by Christ*, is of *perpetual obligation*.

Lastly, a sacrament is *a mean whereby we receive the grace of God, and a pledge to assure us thereof*. — The Gospel, we know, is a gracious covenant between God and man. On our part, the conditions are faith and obedience, which includes repentance: on God's part, the forgiveness of our sins and eternal life. Now the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper are the appointed *means* whereby we *receive*; that is, whereby we humbly declare our acceptance of these conditions, and our resolution of observing them: and on God's part they are a kind of *pledge* and security, that these gracious conditions shall be performed. Seals and signatures are *visible signs*, which have in all ages been thought necessary in the execution of a covenant: they are necessary to reduce into a formal act what would otherwise be only an intention of the mind. In conformity to human ideas, God thought fit to appoint circumcision as a ratification of the Jewish

Jewish covenant. St. Paul mentions it under the idea of a seal \*, by which that covenant was confirmed. Under the same idea the two sacraments were appointed, and may be considered on God's part as his seals to the covenant of grace; or, as it is here phrased, *pledges to assure us thereof.*

A sacrament in general being thus defined, the sacrament of *baptism* is next considered; in which if we examine the inward grace, we shall see how aptly the outward sign represents it. The *inward grace*, or *thing signified*, we are told, is *a death unto sin, and a new birth unto righteousness*: by which is meant that great renovation of nature, that purity of heart, which the Christian religion is intended to produce. And surely there cannot be a more significant *sign* of this than water, on account of its *cleansing nature*. As water purifies the body from all contracted filth, it aptly represents that renovation of nature, which cleanses the soul from the impurities of sin. Water, indeed, among the ancients was more adapted to the *thing signified*, than it is at present among us. They used immersion in

\* Rom. iv. 11.

baptising;

baptising ; so that the child, being dipped into the water and raised again, baptism with them was more significant of a new birth unto righteousness than with us. But though we, in these colder climates, think immersion an unsafe practice, yet we still preserve the original meaning.

It is next asked, what is required of those who are baptised ? To this we answer, *Repentance, whereby they forsake sin ; and faith, whereby they steadfastly believe the promises of God made to them in that sacrament.*

The primitive church was extremely strict on this head. In those times, before Christianity was established, when adults offered themselves to baptism, no one was admitted till he had given a satisfactory evidence of his repentance ; and till, on good grounds, he could profess his faith in Christ : and it was afterwards expected from him, that he should prove his faith and repentance by a regular obedience during the future part of his life.

If faith and repentance are expected at baptism, it is a natural question, *Why then are infants baptised, when, by reason of their tender age, they can give no evidence of either ?*

Whether

Whether infants should be admitted to baptism, or whether that sacrament should be deferred till years of discretion, is a question in the christian church which hath been agitated with some animosity. Our church by no means looks on baptism as necessary to the infant's salvation \*. No man, acquainted with the spirit of Christianity, can conceive that God will leave the salvation of so many innocent souls in the hands of others. But the practice is considered as founded on the usage of the earliest times. The church observes also that circumcision was the introductory rite to the Jewish covenant, and that baptism was intended to succeed circumcision. It observes also, that as the child inherits the *promise of God made in the sacrament*, (namely, eternal life,) it may surely be a partaker of the *outward and visible sign of it*. The church, however, in this case, hath provided sponsors, who make a profession of obedience in the child's name. But the nature, and office, and neglect of this proxy, hath been already examined under the head of our baptismal vow.

\* The catechism asserts the sacraments to be only generally necessary to salvation, excepting particular cases. Where the use of them is intentionally rejected, it is certainly criminal.—The Quakers, indeed, reject them on principle; but though we may wonder both at their logic and divinity, we should be sorry to include them in an anathema.

## LECTURE XXVII.

*Sacrament of the Lord's supper—its end—significancy of its symbols—the words “verily and indeed taken” explained—frame of mind requisite on receiving it—other ends in the sacrament besides those proposed.*

HAVING thus considered the sacrament of baptism, the catechism proceeds lastly to the sacrament of the Lord's supper. The first question is an inquiry into the original of the institution: *Why was the sacrament of the Lord's supper ordained?*

It was ordained, we are informed, for the continual remembrance of the sacrifice of the death of Christ, and of the benefits which we receive thereby.

The outward part or sign is bread and wine; the things signified are the body and blood of Christ. In examining the sacrament of baptism, we observed how very apt a symbol water is in that ceremony. Bread and wine also are symbols equally apt in representing the body and blood of Christ: and in the use of these particular symbols, it is reasonable to suppose, that our Saviour

Saviour had an eye to the Jewish passover; in which it was a custom to drink wine, and to eat bread. He might have instituted any other apt symbols for the same purpose; but it was his usual practice, through the whole system of his institution, to make it, in every part, as familiar as possible; and for this reason he seems to have chosen such symbols as were then in use, that he might give as little offence as possible in a matter of indifference.

As our Saviour, in the institution of his supper, ordered *both* the bread and the wine to be received, it is certainly a great error in the Popish religion to deny the cup to the laity. They say, indeed, that as both flesh and blood are united in the substance of the human body, so are they in the sacramental bread; which, according to them, is changed, or, as they phrase it, *transubstantiated* into the *real body of Christ*. If they have no other reason, why do they administer wine to the *clergy*? The clergy might participate equally of both in the bread. — But the plain truth is, they are desirous, by this invention, to add an air of mystery to the sacrament, and a superstitious reverence to the priest; as if he, being endowed with some peculiar holiness, might be allowed the use of both.

There

There is a difficulty in this part of the catechism which should not be passed over. We are told that *the body and blood of Christ are verily and indeed taken, and received by the faithful in the Lord's supper.* This expression sounds very like the Popish doctrine, just mentioned, of transubstantiation. The true sense of the words undoubtedly is, that the faithful believer only *verily and indeed receives the benefit of the sacrament;* but the expression must be allowed to be inaccurate, as it is capable of an interpretation so entirely opposite to that which the church of England hath always professed. — I should not willing suppose, as some have done, that the compilers of the catechism meant to manage the affair of transubstantiation with the papists. It is one thing to shew a liberality of sentiment in matters of indifference, and another to speak timidly and ambiguously where essentials are concerned.

It is next asked, What benefits we receive from the Lord's supper? To which it is answered, *The strengthening and refreshing of our souls by the body and blood of Christ, as our bodies are by the bread and wine.* As our bodies are strengthened

and refreshed, in a natural way, by bread and wine; so should our souls be, in a spiritual way, by a devout commemoration of the passion of Christ. By gratefully remembering what he suffered for us, we should be excited to a greater abhorrence of sin, which was the cause of his sufferings. Every time we partake of this sacrament, we take a fresh oath, as it were, to our leader; and, like faithful soldiers, should be animated anew, by his example, to persevere in the spiritual conflict in which, under him, we are engaged.

It is lastly asked, *What is required of them who come to the Lord's supper?* To which we answer, That we should examine ourselves, whether we repent us truly of our former sins; steadfastly purposing to lead a new life; have a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ; with a thankful remembrance of his death; and to be in charity with all men.

That pious frame of mind is here in few words pointed out, which a Christian ought to cherish and cultivate in himself at all times; but especially on the performance of any solemn act of religion. Very little indeed is said in Scripture, of any particular frame of mind, which should accompany the performance of this duty,

but it may easily be inferred from the nature of the duty itself.

In the first place *we should repent us truly of our former sins; steadfastly purposing to lead a new life.* He who performs a religious exercise, without being earnest in this point, adds only a pharisaical hypocrisy to his other sins. Unless he seriously resolve to *lead a good life*, he had better be all of a piece, and not pretend, by receiving the sacrament, to a piety which he does not feel.

These *steadfast purposes of leading a new life* form a very becoming exercise to Christians at all times. The lives even of the best men afford a mortifying retrospect. Though they may have conquered some of their worst propensities, yet the triumphs of sin over them, at the various periods of their lives, will always be remembered with sorrow, and may always be remembered with advantage, keeping them on their guard for the future, and strengthening them more and more in all their good resolutions of obedience. —But if at any time these meditations arise more properly than at another, it is when we are performing a rite, instituted on purpose to commemorate the great atonement for sin.

To our repentance and resolutions of obedience, we are required to add a lively faith in God's mercy through Christ, with a thankful remembrance of

of his death. We should impress ourselves with the deepest sense of humility, totally rejecting every idea of our own merit; hoping for God's favour only through the merits of our great Redeemer; and with hearts full of gratitude, trusting only in his all-sufficient sacrifice.

Lastly, we are required, at the celebration of this great rite, to be *in charity with all men*. It commemorates the greatest instance of love that can be conceived, and should therefore raise in us correspondent affections. It should excite in us that constant flow of benevolence in which the spirit of religion consists, and without which indeed we can have no religion at all. Love is the very distinguishing badge of Christianity. By this, said our great Master, *shall all men know that ye are my disciples.*

One species of charity should, at this time, never be forgotten; and that is, the *forgiveness of others*. No acceptable gift can be offered at this altar, but in the spirit of reconciliation. Hence it was that the ancient Christians instituted, at the celebration of the Lord's supper, what they called *love feasts*. They thought they could not give a better instance of their being in perfect charity with each other, than by joining, all ranks together, in one common meal. By degrees, indeed this well-meant custom degenerated;

and it may not be amiss to observe here, that the passages \* in which these enormities are rebuked, have been variously misconstrued, and have frightened many well-meaning persons from the sacrament. Whereas what the apostle here says hath no other relation to this rite than as it was attended by a particular abuse in receiving it; and as this mode of abuse doth not now exist, the apostle's reproof seems not to affect the Christians of this age, though it may apply to other abuses.

Thus we have examined the sacraments of *baptism* and *the Lord's supper*, and have seen that both were primarily instituted, as the means, on our part, of *receiving or accepting the grace of God in the Gospel*; and on God's part, as *pledges to assure us thereof*.

But besides these *primary* ends, the two sacraments are so contrived as to have each a *secondary* one, *visibly representing to us the two most important truths* of our religion. Baptism, under the idea of a renewal of our nature, holds out to us, that we are lost and fallen creatures. The Lord's supper, on the other hand, holds out the remedy, *the atoning blood of Christ*.

• See 1 Cor. xi. 21, 22. 27. 29.

Farther

Farther ends these sacraments might also have. They might be intended also as *visible bonds* of union among Christians. We have hints of this kind in Scripture. Baptism unites us all into one *common family*: and the Lord's supper considers us all as *equal partakers* of the benefits it represents.

The two sacraments are strong arguments also for the truth of Christianity. We trace the observance of them into the very earliest times of the Gospel. We can trace no other origin than what the Scriptures give us. These rites, therefore, greatly tend to authenticate the Scriptures.

God also, who knows what is in man, might condescend so far to his weakness as to give him these *external badges* of religion to keep the *spirit* of it more alive. And it is indeed probable, that nothing has contributed more than these ceremonies to preserve a sense of religion among mankind. It is a melancholy proof of this, that no contentions in the christian church have been more violent nor carried on with more acrimony and unchristian zeal than the contentions about baptism and the Lord's supper, as if the very essence of religion consisted in this or that *mode* of observing these rites.

Let us be better taught: let us receive these sacraments for the gracious purposes which our

Lord intended with gratitude and with reverence. But let us not lay a greater stress upon them than our Lord intended. Heaven, we doubt not, may be gained when there have been the means of receiving neither the one sacrament nor the other. But unless our affections are right, and our lives answerable to them, we can never please God, though we perform the externals of religion with ever so much exactness. We may err in our notions about the sacraments: the world has long been divided on these subjects; and a gracious God, it may be hoped, will pardon our errors. But in matters of practice we have no apology for error. The great lines of our duty are drawn so strong, that a deviation here is not error but guilt.

Let us then (to conclude from the *whole*) make it our principal care to purify our hearts in the sight of God. Let us beseech him to increase the influence of his Holy Spirit within us, that our faith may be of that kind *which worketh by love*; that all our affections, and from them our actions, may flow in a steady course of obedience; that each day may correct the last by a sincere repentance of our mistakes in life; and that we may continue gradually to approach nearer the idea

idea of christian perfection. Let us do this, disclaiming after all any merits of our own ; and not trusting in outward observances, but trusting in the merits of Christ to make up our deficiencies, and we may humbly hope to find acceptance with God.

THE END.



*Written by the same AUTHOR, and published by  
Messrs. CADELL and DAVIES in the Strand.*

**AN EXPOSITION** of the **NEW TESTAMENT**, intended as an introduction to the study of the **HOLY SCRIPTURES**, by pointing out the leading sense and connection of the sacred writers. In 4to. Price 1l. 1s. 2d Edit. in 8vo., 12s.

**LIVES** of several **REFORMERS**, of different editions, and prices, the whole together 12s. 6d.

**SERMONS** preached to a Country Congregation.

**TWO SERMONS**, *On comparing Spiritual Things with Spiritual;* and *On the Simplicity of the Gospel.* Price 1s. 6d.

**AN ESSAY ON PRINTS.** 8vo. 4th edit. Price 4s.

**PICTURESQUE REMARKS** on the RIVER WYE. 4th edit. Price 17s.

————— on the **LAKES** of **CUMBERLAND** and **WESTMORELAND**. 2 vol. 3d edit. Price 1l. 11s. 6d.

————— on the **HIGHLANDS** of **SCOTLAND**. 2 vol. 2d edit. Price 1l. 16s.

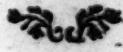
————— on **FOREST SCENERY**. 2 vol. 2d edit. Price 1l. 16s.

————— on the **WESTERN PARTS** of **ENGLAND**.

**Three ESSAYS**; *On PICTURESQUE BEAUTY;* *On PICTURESQUE TRAVEL;* and *on the ART of SKETCHING LANDSCAPE.* 2d edit. Price 10s. 6d.

**LIFE** of **JOHN TRUEMAN**, &c. for the use of servants-halls, cottages, and farm-houses. 3d edit. Price 10d. or 10s for 4l.

**AN ACCOUNT** of **WILLIAM BAKER**. 2d edit. Price 3d. May be bound up with **J. TRUEMAN**.



*Printed by A. Strahan, Printers Street, London.*

an  
ng  
to.  
es,  
al;  
dit-  
ND-  
OT-  
vol.  
of  
TU-  
ND-  
alls,  
l.  
3.d.